

Irish Writing

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Edited by

DAVID MARCUS

and

TERENCE SMITH

NUMBER FIFTEEN

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THE SHORT STORY

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BENEDICT KIELY

RICH AND RARE WERE THE GEMS SHE WORE

HE was exactly as Monica had described him. The tall potted palm drooped over him like an umbrella over a great white chief. The slim girl in the black dress in the bright little glittering reception office put her soft round chin in her perfumed crimson-clawed hands and looked at him with admiration through the leaves of the drooping palm. Well-dressed people criss-crossed the lounge to the diningroom or the lift or the cocktail bar. Fanny walked slowly across the deep carpet, circling to avoid the long stretched legs of an old clergyman half-asleep in an armchair. She fingered in the pocket of her pale grey jigger-coat the smooth creamlined paper of Monica's letter. His description was written there, but she didn't need to read it again. She knew it by heart. Monica had a prim precise way of describing people, writing so that when you read you could hear her talk, each word neatly nipped into separate existence by the firm lips of a small pretty mouth:

"He's six feet. His shoulders are broad, but his waist looks quite slim in the very smart uniform of an American major. His skin is dark like an Italian or an Indian. Actually his father was Italian and his mother Irish and when the States went to war he was in the Pacific. And of course he comes from California which all helps to add to his natural sun-tan. He's in Belfast on some important business and one isn't supposed to ask him what he's doing there. (That little hint was so like Monica. As if Fanny went about asking American majors what they were doing in Belfast.) His hair is dark too and well-oiled. His jaws are just a little hollow and his chin always a little dark from the razor. A Roman nose, a wide high forehead, very white teeth, a flashing smile, and, of course, an American drawl. A real latin glamour boy but a very nice fellow. You'll love him."

The flashing smile went on suddenly as if the girl in the glass box had touched her dainty shoe on a concealed switch. He was on his feet before Fanny reached him.

"I bet," he said to the whole lounge, to the slim girl in reception, to the criss-crossing people, to the dozing priest; "I bet it's Fanny."

They clasped and held hands. She said: "It's Fanny all right. How on earth did you recognise me so quickly?"

He steered her across the carpet towards the cocktail bar and with his free hand slipped from his inner breast-pocket a wallet of tooled blue leather, opened it—still using one hand, took from it a folded letter, creamlaid notepaper, and (all the time using one hand) restored the wallet to his pocket. His dark face had the conscious impassivity of a skilled conjuror.

IRISH WRITING

"The clues are all right here. Written down in the neatest orthography in this cute little island."

He waved the letter in the air. She could—feeling a little uneasy at the familiar way in which his left hand crooked and rested just a little above her left buttock—smell when he waved the letter the strong scent that Monica used. But he didn't unfold the letter until they faced each other across two drinks and the inevitable tiny glass-topped table that didn't come up to his knees. He read snippets from Monica's description of Fanny, glanced across drinks and table after each snippet—like a policeman verifying a passport description, smiled dazzlingly when the reality corresponded as it always did, to Monica's neat words.

He said: "That Monica girl sure has both eyes on the ball." He read: "Tall for a woman. Dark hair, razor-cut and curling beautifully. Oval face, a little lonely looking. Large grey eyes. Slim. Walks very gracefully with head high." He said: "I noticed that as you came in."

"Somebody should tell Monica I'm not a racehorse."

"I will if you like."

He dropped his eyes laughing to the letter: "She'll wear by arrangement if the day is wet a white mac with cape lined with white fur and carry a green umbrella, and if the day is dry a three-quarter length jigger-coat in pale grey with large sailor collar trimmed with red."

His eyes checked across the table, meeting and for a moment holding her large grey eyes.

"So that's what they call a jigger. She doesn't say a word about your skirt. I suppose you normally wear one."

"Except when I'm in bed. All the girls do here, you know. The climate isn't like California."

"It's swell today though." He raised his eyes to the imitation Georgian ceiling as if he could see through its hideous decoration and through the layers of hotel bedrooms, dusty from the morning efforts of chambermaids, the blue sky and the sunlight over the city.

"I hope you two will get on well together." His eyes were again on the letter. "And that Fanny will show you all the beauties of Dublin."

He raised his eyes slowly, his handsome face serious: "Well here's to Monica's good wishes. And to the first beauty I've laid eyes on in dear old Dublin."

Fanny didn't blush. She was quite accustomed to people telling her she was beautiful. But this splendidly uniformed man had been in so many places and seen so many women that a girl couldn't but be pleased when a compliment, sober and hard with sincerity came from his lips. So smiling she raised her glass and gently clinked it against his and later when they walked for lunch to the diningroom she no longer felt uneasy at the touch of his crouching caressing left hand.

The dozing priest as they passed opened his eyes and took one disapproving look at the spectacle of an American officer walking in public with an arm round an Irish girl.

The girl in reception studied her red claws. Her impossibly pretty face could have concealed anything from envy to contemplation of crossword puzzles. Monica teaching in a schoolhouse in another city looked at her watch and primly satisfied herself that her two letters had done their work.

* * * *

Over an excellent lunch and a bottle of good wine they began to get on well together. Fanny had always prided herself on being an easy mixer.

His name was Eddy. His eyelashes were long and darkly silken and his eyelids drooped when he talked, lazily drawling. That droop of the eyelids he must have inherited from his Latin father. It reminded Fanny of the face of a Parisian fiddler: a sallow inscrutable face, eyelids drooping to suggest mystery; a fiddler with white shirt, red sash, tight black trousers, playing odd eastern dance tunes around and around your table. Monica and Fanny had spent a holiday in Paris together. Monica had intensely admired the poise and the playing of that sphinx-like fiddler.

"Have you visited Paris?" she asked.

"Sure have. Swell town."

She couldn't expect him to say more and to manage his soup at the same time, yet from a latin-faced man in a magnificent uniform "swell town" didn't seem fair to Paris. She tried to lift the conversation into a clearer air.

"I know a man who lived there for twenty years. He came back recently. He was a friend of James Joyce."

"Gee that's mighty interesting. James Joyce was a fellow who wrote books."

"Not very nice books I'm afraid." It wouldn't do to let a stranger out of the country with the impression that young Irish women unreservedly approved of James Joyce.

"Back home," he said, "where I went to college everybody seemed to think his books took a lot of licking. A friend of mine came all the way over here to write a Thesis on Joyce, but from what he told me subsequently I think he wrote his thesis on Paddy Flaherty's whiskey."

Fanny was mildly amused. He said: "I'm not really a literary fellow myself. But I know a guy called Lefty whose uncle is an author."

"Which author?"

"That I don't know. I reckon he can't be much of an author or Lefty'd have told me. Lefty's fond of talking big about his folk."

Over braised ham and chicken there was the inevitable lull in the conversation. Then, sweetening her mouth with three short

sips of wine, she said: "What are your first impressions of this place?"

"Swell town. Not as big as London and not as bright as Paris."

"I think myself it's dowdy."

"Oh, come on. Dowdy's a hard word. Granted I've only seen what you see coming from the station. And this hotel. And yourself. It all looks swell to me. Especially yourself."

The difficulty about talking to men, Fanny reflected, was that, Irish or English or American—and particularly French—they had a most irritating way of continually forcing the conversation back from interesting harmless generalities to embarrassing, and possibly insincere, personalities. She didn't smile. She didn't blush. She was here to show a stranger the beauties of Ireland's capital, not to welcome, like a tittering adolescent, silly compliments.

"Are you stopping long?"

"Want rid of me already?" There he went again. Say the day was wet or fine or cold or hot and a man always made the remark a personal issue. "I'll be pushing off tomorrow. This is only a flying visit."

She almost said: "What do you want me to do? Weep?" Instead she skimmed away from personalities like a wild duck skimming lake-water, cunningly avoiding the clump of bushes that concealed the gun: "The man I mentioned, the friend of James Joyce, always said the quays in Dublin reminded him slightly of Paris."

"The Paris quays are swell."

"But I know another man who's lived here all his life who says the Liffey reminds him of one of the greater Paris sewers."

"You know a heap of men?"

She sighed: "A few." Leaning across the table with its two cups of potent Irish coffee he held a burning match to her cigarette; and suddenly seeing under the drooping eyelids that veiled his dark eyes she realised that he was amused, was quietly laughing at her and James Joyce and the cobbled quays of Paris and shabby Dublin's dirty river. For one instant she was angry. After all she was doing her best to be entertaining. But she couldn't afford to be angry because anger made her blush and blushing was idiotic and if he noticed her cheeks reddening his amusement would only be increased. She sipped her Irish coffee: rich cream and Power's whiskey and black coffee. With the strong taste in her mouth, with cigarette smoke wreathing before her face, she smiled at him and he smiled in return. Then they laughed together at the unspoken undefined joke. The initial awkwardness was over.

"So we see the quays," he said, "and decide for ourselves."

And after lunch they saw the city. They climbed laboriously to the platform on Nelson's Pillar, counting the steps as they ascended, losing count and laughing and holding hands in the darkness on the steep spiral stairway. He was Monica's friend

and holding hands as a means to ascend those interminable stairs seemed to be something that without shame or scruple a woman could do. Out on the dizzy windy platform she could also shelter and support herself in the crook of a muscular uniformed arm while they looked down on pedestrians swarming like ants on the pavement, on buses like great beetles curiously elongated, on the Liffey cutting straight through Georgian houses to rattling ship-lined docks; or lifting their eyes they could look south to round-backed mountains like a crowded herd of blue cattle, or east to flat sandy coastline and a graceful headland lying long on the water.

"That's Howth Head."

"It looks heavenly."

"It is. Up on the summit there's just heather and gorse and grazing goats. On a clear day you can look north to the mountains of Mourne and south to Wicklow Head."

On the high platform at Nelson's stone feet, dizzily high above beetles and clockwork ants, he chanted:

But for all that I found there I might as well be

Where the mountains of Mourne sweep down to the sea.

An elderly couple looking north towards the statue of Father Theobald Mathew, apostle of temperance, and towards the monument to Charles Stewart Parnell who loved his country and another man's wife smiled encouragingly when they heard the American voice singing a song about Irish mountains. "My mom sang that song," he explained generally. "She came from County Down. I'd love to go to Howth to see the heather and the gorse."

She promised: "We'll go there when we see the centre of the city," and he held her hand again guiding her all the way down the steep winding stair, but once out in the street in the crowds and the dazzling sunshine she gently, ever so gently, disengaged herself. She didn't want to hurt his feelings or to set him thinking that Irish girls were impossibly rigid, stiffly and uncompromisingly proper, but she had to live in the city and if any of her acquaintances saw her hand-in-hand in O'Connell Street with a Yankee officer she'd never hear the end of it. So primly separate and apart they walked the crowded pavement as far as the bridge, stopped there for a while and she pointed to the graceful dome of the eighteenth century Customs House, to the towers of a Norman cathedral, to the greatest brewery in the world, to the slim distant obelisk built in a park to honour the victor of Waterloo. From the bridge southwards their progress was according to the guide book, their talk was of cities and famous men. (The Bank of Ireland had in the eighteenth century housed a parliament. And there was Trinity College founded by Queen Elizabeth, and there, on pedestals were Thomas Moore, Oliver Goldsmith, Edmund Burke and Henry Grattan). She warmed towards him more and more, discovering behind his dangerous always-threatening glamour, behind his nonchalant assumption of ignorance a sound knowledge of books and places. (And there

sitting on his pedestal beside Trinity campanile was William Hartpole Lecky the famous historian). He liked her too, she thought. He seemed to enjoy her conversation. He held her hand again at the door of Trinity library and she closed her fingers on his firm dry palm. After all, Trinity students didn't count as people. (And there secure in its protecting case was the wonderful book of Kells, burning with colour, intricate with the whorled illuminated capitals cunningly drawn, "by holy men who had a hand in heaven.") And that she explained was a quotation from a modern Irish poet and to her surprise he named the poet. Americans could have the most unexpected capabilities.

By a side-gate opening into a bye-way they came out again into the streets of the city and once again, conscious of the possibilities of passing eyes, she disengaged her hand. (And there facing them was a weird mosque-like building where Dubliners once exposed themselves to steam in Turkish baths). He patted his lips with the fingers of his right hand, warm from her fingers, mentioned thirst and the heat of the sun, suggested a quick one; and, thinking she should really say no, she said yes. In an underground room where brawny blazered students were sitting on barrels or playing darts he drank iced lager and she drank iced orange. She wasn't, she assured him when they were out again in the streets and out of the hearing of the students, really a drinking woman: she drank wine at meals when possible merely because she had lived in Paris and contracted a liking for some French habits.

"Not all French habits?"

She didn't answer that question. It had been asked her so often by men who thought that because an Irish girl taught school for a while in Paris she must therefore be an abandoned woman. (And there anyway was Leinster House where Lord Edward Fitzgerald once lived and where the Dail—pronounced "Doll"—now talked about politics, partition and the price of bacon. And there were the country representatives arriving in their new Ford cars. And there was the historical museum. The Zoological museum was in another street. And there was the place where there had once been a hideous statue to Queen Victoria. And here now was the National Library sacred to the memory of James Joyce, and here was the green marble bannister that had always reminded Joyce of smooth-sliding Mincius crowned with vocal reeds.) What a pity, she said sternly, he hadn't censored his own books just a little more thoroughly. There were some words to be found in his pages that just shouldn't be written down and the younger Irish writers had been affected by his bad example.

Of course, she explained, to his wondering Californian ears the Irish people were inclined to extremes: in politics, bad language, drink. They needed literary censorship and much more rigid licensing laws. You never saw in Paris the hordes of drunkards you saw at closing time in Dublin.

He said yes—doubtfully. He pointed out that the French didn't worry their pants about closing time.

"But that would never do here. The people would run wild."

Again he said yes. He held her right elbow tightly in the intensity of the argument. They leaned against smooth-sliding Mincius crowned with vocal reeds.

He said: "Now tell me about the Irish colleens. Do they share the national wildness?"

She was looking away from him towards the hideous stained glass window, centred by the representation of a dirty old bearded man—supposed to be Leonardo, so he didn't notice how she winced at the word "colleens". Nor did she notice how his eyes twice considered her, ankles to buttocks to bust to lips to dark glossy crown and slowly curving back again. She said: "Irish women have always been a steady influence. That's our national tradition. I think we keep ourselves to ourselves better than the women of most nations, except perhaps the English who are very reserved. I can't speak for the United States."

"I can." His dark face was the face of a man made suddenly melancholy by the memory of lost youth and past pleasures, by fears for the arid and unrewarding present.

* * * *

The Howth bus was blue and waiting outside a cream-coloured cinema on the windy sunny quays. When they climbed the stairs to the top deck he was still inclined to be silent and melancholy, she was still excited by her consciousness of spiritual union with generations of heroically aloof women. (And there once again as the bus went north was Gandon's graceful Customs House, and the track of mud called the river Tolka, and Clontarf where Brian beat the Danes). He began to talk again when they could see through the gaps between neat suburban houses the sun bright on green fields. (And there was an ancient ruined church and an ancient cemetery where an eighteenth century police informer was buried). He shouted when he saw the sea. He draped his left arm around her shoulders. There wasn't anything she, or any heroic woman, could do about that. His left hand fondled her left ear. Thank God they were sitting in the back seat. Thank God there were none of her acquaintances in the bus. Her heart was beating rapidly. (And there she said, with trembling voice, her right hand pointing across the water, was Lambay Island and the rock called "Ireland's Eye"). His left hand pinched the lobe of her left ear. She'd always heard Americans were over-familiar. When his pinching fingers closed for the second time she stiffened herself away from him so noticeably that he withdrew the encircling arm. He sat quietly then listening to her breathless description of the beauties of the coast, the pincer arms of the harbour curving around the bobbing anchored boats, the gradual ascent of the cliffs until the path they walked on was high above the screaming gulls, the burning yellow of the hillside furze, the lighthouse white as

snow and perched on a promontory that was like the end of the world. That day the cliff path was crowded with holiday visitors. It was so narrow that they had to walk slowly and in single file. So keeping always a few paces ahead she could guard herself easily against embraces and pinches—until they sat down for a rest on a green crumbling seat and without a word or movement of preliminary he bent over her and kissed her full on the lips.

She could have screamed. She would have screamed. She would have slapped his olive-coloured face. But two flabby elderly women came along the curving path, talking loudly in Glasgow accents about Leopardstown Races. They wore black silk dresses and they perspired. By the time they had waddled slowly out of sight she had remembered that even if he was rude he was Monica's friend. She couldn't, because of that, reply to rudeness by rudeness, couldn't slap, couldn't rise and run away. She said weakly, annoyed at her lack of steady breath: "You shouldn't do that."

"Why not?"

"We've only known each other a few hours."

"Is that the only reason?"

"It's so common."

"Not common enough." He sighed; and against her will she smiled until he spoiled the mood by saying: "You're so uncommon. I've never seen a model like you before."

"You don't mean that."

"Test me and see."

Since the argument was going so hopelessly against her she thought the best thing to do was to stand up, look at her watch, and say: "Time we were going back to the hotel." She did all that and said all that, and he agreed amicably. All the way back along the cliff-path she walked as fast as she could, feeling awkward, feeling his eyes perched like bats on a wall somewhere about her lumbar spine, hearing him coming easily softfootedly behind her. He talked about the cliffs and the distant northern mountains, about the speed of a steamer coming out from the port and curving round the head-land to face across restless water towards Liverpool. Now and again he mentioned the lovely way she walked.

* * * *

Two violins, a violoncello, a piano, two tall fiddling women in black dinner dresses, a red-headed male cellist, and a fat woman touching skilfully the keys of the piano.

Their table was in the corner of the diningroom furthest away from the orchestra, but waiters and diners, like the shaded lights, were muted; and their ears were washed against and filled with the sound of rich strings, slowly beginning, a cool Grieg wind blowing over lakeside reeds in some brief northern summer. The reeds quiver, bend, sway apart like silken dancers to show a lake sometimes placid as a pure soul or sometimes glimmering like an untouched virgin body. She said, nervously feeling her way: "I adore Grieg."

"Some music. Swell," he said. "But too Scandinavian for my own personal taste."

"It's all rocks and forests and lakes and flowing streams."

"Not enough about wine and the sun," he said, "and dancing girls and castanets and tarantellas and so on." Forgetting his soup he talked excitedly, hands gesturing, about flamenco. If it hadn't been for his emblemed uniform and his nasality she could have imagined she was listening to some Spaniard or Italian in whom hatred of cold northern places had smouldered all day like a fire. He spoke with passion. He knew a great deal about music. No longer had she the uneasy feeling that he was looking at her under drooping eyelids and laughing a little. His eyes were now wide open. Monica, too, was musical and Fanny imagined that a common love for beautiful sound must be the reason for the friendship between Monica and this foreign man. All during the soup and the fish and the joint he talked music, then relaxed with a self-deprecatory sigh and a shrug, his palms flat on the tablecloth, his mouth softening into a smile. "Father Abraham," he said, "how I do run on."

"I like you when you talk like that." She really meant it.

"Only then?" He laughed; and, forgiving his impertinent kiss, she laughed with him. Later, when they sat side-by-side in the lounge, he said: "Thanks a lot, Fanny. That was a lovely day."

"I think so too."

"I'd no idea when I stepped off my train that I'd find such a sweet person to show me the sights."

"I never thought I'd find such a . . ." Then she stopped. She didn't as a rule talk like that, and thinking backwards she tried to remember how many drinks she'd taken that day. But his shoulder was against her shoulder, his inbreathing just a little slower than hers, and she couldn't count beyond five. "Such a what?" he asked, turning towards her. "A drip? A dope? A heel?"

She could only smile and play with her glass and feel foolish and then, to shatter the silence spreading out like a damp mist from the core of her foolishness, whisper: "What a pity such a day has to end."

"It doesn't have to." She thought that over, her thinking a little confused and lacking cohesion. She shouldn't drink so much. Determinedly she put her glass down on the glassstopped table, bringing down the curtain on the lovely day, quenching the light, drowning the sun in the sea, saying: "But every day must end."

"When the day ends, sister Fanny, the night begins." He was leaning sideways, whispering to her, his breath pleasantly pungent with whiskey, his left hand covering her right hand and pressing some hard metal object against her dry palm. The words, the pressure, the unseen but felt shape of the hard metal made her sober and cold with realisation, made her withdraw her hand,

open it, look at the key, then drop it suddenly on the seat between them in horror that some acquaintance might be sitting in the lounge, watching her with an American officer and a bedroom key.

"Good God," she said. "Do you seriously mean that you want me to . . . go up to your room?"

He was, to do him justice, startled. "I'm offering you hospitality." Then weakly: "You've been so nice to me."

"What do you think I am?"

"A nice girl."

"Every time you meet a nice girl do you offer her . . . this?" Her fingers touched quickly on, then leaped away from, the metal of the evil key.

"Not every time, Fanny. I have my prejudices."

"How nice of you. I suppose you think I ought to feel complimented."

"After that Fanny," he said—he drawled sleepily, "you'll ask me haven't I any respect for you or for women in general or don't I remember my mother."

"What would you think if some other man made that suggestion to your sister?"

That touched him. He wasn't sleepily sprawling any more, but sitting upright, rapidly talking, his hands as active as they had been when he remembered the rhythms of the south, flamenco and tarantellas. "Listen," he said, "I've three sisters. Great kids. Good to look at. What they do is strictly their own business, not mine. I don't like big brothers."

"I can imagine why." She picked up her handbag, her net gloves, seldom worn, for her hands were generally clean and cool. She said: "You shock me," and he laughed. "What do you do to me, Fanny? What do you do to me? You're so lovely. Hasn't any man ever?"

She would have stood up, but that would have meant louder speaking, and heaven only knew who was watching and listening, for she was afraid to look directly at the faces lined like white masks around the wall of the lounge.

"No. Nobody ever."

"Never even tried?"

"No! No! No!"

"Well strike me." He rubbed his palms on his thighs, smoothly rubbing down towards his kneecaps, a gesture of bawdy amused surprise. "Are all the men around here paralysed?" Then indignantly she stood up: "They have some respect for their women."

"Oh that!" He walked beside her across the lounge and the outer lounge and through the swinging glass doors. The slim girl in the black desk in the bright little glittering little reception office had been relieved by a pretty, plump, redheaded girl, also in a black dress, who cupped a dimpled chin in warm hands and looked mistily after the major. To one of the flunkies he said: "A taxi."

and when they were crossing the pavement he said: "Okay Fanny. It's been a lovely day and I hope I didn't offend you. But I sure do wish you could have told me earlier in the night the sort of nice girl you were."

"I think that should have been clear enough. I don't have to tell you I'm not a . . ." She couldn't say the horrible word. She should have been devastatingly angry but instead her voice trembled and she wanted to cry. Men were rotten. He was so unperturbed, so politely ready to put her into a taxi and see the end of her forever and forever. "I'm only passing through," he said. His voice was mock apologetic. But she knew he didn't mean to be apologetic. His hand was on the handle of the door of the taxi. "I've no time to waste. You get that way with a war on and the habit sticks. I like constant company and I bet you, Fanny, ten dollars that before this night is out"

She couldn't listen to any more. She caught the door and slammed it and in a stifled voice gave to the taximan the secure address of her father's house.

* * * *

In the corner of the taxi she sat shivering for several minutes, shrinking away from something or somebody. Then, courage returning, she moved to the middle of the seat. What was it to her if a strange man had proved himself a contemptible blackguard.

At her father's gate she fumbled in her handbag. The driver said: "Gentleman paid, Miss," and she felt hot all over, angry, ashamed, humiliated, an empty carton returned, carriage-paid to the factory. And he was Monica's friend?

It wouldn't be so bad if he hadn't up to that moment been such a nice fellow. She had forgotten about the kiss on the hill of Howth, a foray of a kiss, unexpected, unwanted, unremembered. He seemed well-read. He did know about music. And underneath he was rotten, no different from a diseased creature hopefully, suggestively whistling or whispering in a dark alley, or a maniac chasing young girls along suburban roads. And he was Monica's friend? Well, Monica, she supposed, her hand again fumbling in her handbag, her left foot on the doorstep, could look after herself. But the feel in her hand of the key of her father's door renewed the awful revelation of that moment in the hotel, the hard metal pressed in invitation against her palm. How could Monica escape such moments if she went on being his friend? Or was Monica above and beyond such degradation and was she, Fanny, just the sort that made a man feel the castle was conquered, the gate flung open, the drawbridge down?

In her bed the cold shivering returned and with it, as in the taxi, the tendency to move away from something.

She clutched her Rosary beads and prayed for sleep and was then afraid that sleep might come not unaccompanied. When she did fall into an uneasy sleep it was only to be awakened by the shrilling of a bell, the telephone, once, twice, three times: and

warned by some obscure instinct she raced barefooted, her night-dress slipping off her left shoulder, before her father or mother or brothers or sisters could come out of their decent sleep. Over the wire his nasality was more pronounced. He said: "Hello, Hello. Is that you Fanny? Apologies for butting in on your repose."

"What do you want?"

"Monica gave me a parcel, a book or something to give to you. I've just remembered. If I leave it here at the hotel you could collect it some time."

"Thank you. Good night."

"No hard feelings Fanny?"

"Good night."

"I'm a brash boy but I wouldn't want to be more than necessarily offensive."

More than necessarily?

"Good night."

"Just one thing Fanny. You remember I was about to lay a little bet when you slammed the door of the cab in my face. Well, here she is to say hello. Say hello to Fanny, honey. Fanny's a nice girl."

Deliberately intensifying and extending the horror she listened until she heard a woman's voice, husky probably with drink, saying hello, hello, Fanny, hello, hello. Then quietly she put down the telephone.

Her rumpled bed was as inviting as a rock. Slipping on a heavy dressing-gown she went into her father's study, sat in his chair at his desk before his black-and-white Crucifix, tried with his pen and on his notepaper to write to Monica, tore up three attempts, ceased to try any more. The quiet of her father's house invited a scream. Her Rosary beads sprawled black on her pillow. Tomorrow she'd take the train and go to Belfast and warn Monica. But perhaps Monica already knew. Perhaps Monica didn't mind. Monica? Monica? Monica? Anyway she couldn't go to Belfast tomorrow because he'd be on the train.

JOHN P. POWER

UNCIVIL WAR

IT all began with a chest of drawers. Not the civil war itself of course, but my mother's part in it. It might seem absurd at the outset to believe that my mother could find time to indulge in any kind of war. She had a husband and family to look after and any spare time she had was spent mostly in the parish church. Certainly the war should never have touched a woman as pious and hard-working as my mother. Yet it was a simple thing that involved her. As simple a thing as a chest of drawers.

I remember it standing there in the kitchen as I rushed in for my tea one evening. Tall, square and shining with varnish, it was just the thing my mother needed for her bedroom. There were four big full-sized drawers for sheets, blankets under-clothes, etc., and two smaller ones for collars and handkerchiefs. She was showing it off to my father.

"How much, Dinny?" she asked. "Guess how much."

He, with his omniscient, critical eye, was not to be drawn. Back and sides were tapped for flaws. Drawers were tested. With all the airs of a connoisseur he circled the thing many times. After much hemming and hawing he at last came down to cases with a tentative: "Thirty bob."

My mother's smile was triumphant as she proclaimed: "Five shillings. Would you believe it Dinny? Five shillings. The man got it above in the barracks where the Republicans are giving away any amount of stuff for nothing."

I had never before heard of people getting things without payment, so naturally, having finished my tea, I set out for the barracks.

I was at the foot of Market Hill when a woman passed by grappling with a mattress as if it were a live thing. Even though she might hear me, I still had to laugh out loud, for, every few yards, her grip on the mattress weakened and, like the collapse of a tent, down about her head it would come. Once she trod on her trailing shawl and both she and her burden went sprawling. But at no time at all did she swear or get futilely angry or cry as women usually do in such circumstances. All that woman wanted was to get home as quickly as possible. She did not look very strong, but she hurried and shooed and drove that mattress along down Market Hill with a fierceness born of want and determination. There was something elemental in her eyes that stopped my laughing.

Then came a group with the same appearance of running away, as from a volcano. A man and two girls carried a wardrobe between them. In front of them, rolling a pram and setting the pace, ran a barefoot boy. His load was like the front window of a

second-hand store—candlesticks, mirrors, basins, etc. When he dropped something he never stopped to pick it up but kept on going. The woman in the party was his mother. I know that because, as a picture or candlestick jogged off the pram, she made a face as if in pain. She herself carried or rather dragged a huge roll of carpet. The same hungry look that had nothing to do with food was in all their eyes.

Behind this family came a man hugging a lavatory basin. I knew the man. He was an old ex-navy pensioner called 'Chains' McLoughlin. What 'Chains' wanted with the thing I could not say as 'Chains' had no lavatory. In fact he had no house nor home other than the boiler-room of the Gas Station.

The procession thickened and no man, woman or child passed down the hill without a prize. I saw lawnmowers and lampshades, beds and bedding, pots and pans by the score, crockery, furniture, sporting goods, window curtains, carpets and furs. I saw a man and woman pushing a grand-piano. Nowhere in the peoples faces could I find joy or satisfaction until I spied our Jackie.

His eyes were shining. He wore a viking helmet on his head and buckled about him was a long gleaming sword. I called after him and it was with difficulty that he managed to get out of the rush. Before I could ask him the question already trembling on my lips, he pushed me from him and half-whispered, half-hissed: "The barracks. Hurry up, you fool. They're letting everyone in. You can take anything you like before they burn it. The Diehards are going to set fire to the barracks. Run now, will you, before they shut the gates."

But when I got there the gates were already closed. I tried all the other gates. All were closed and a Republican sentry stood guard inside every one. The people coming back for a second helping and finding their entry barred grew sullen and dangerous. They kicked the gates, hammered them with stones, all the time clamouring and shouting. When they tore down the lookout post, made of railway sleepers and sand-bags, turning the former into battering-rams, I watched that French Revolution scene outside the Bastille all over again.

Then a man climbed on top of the gate and a shot rang out. He fell. There was more screaming and olagöning. The women were enjoying this release of the passions. I knew they were. For years to come their heroism at the gates would cause innumerable dinners to be burnt, as across the half-doors they relived this shining hour and told again of the fallen and the slain.

But of course nobody was killed. Not even the man who fell off the gate-top. Unconscious, he was taken out of the crowd to the side of the road and, like a fallen boxer, ministered to with much slapping of the face and waving of shawls. Presently he opened his eyes and sat up. Search as he might over face, forehead, body and legs, he could find neither blood nor wound. Like the reheated spectre of a corpse he climbed to his feet and moved away

down the road. Some days later I met him again. His fright had not passed and he was still cheating the grave.

This one shot and resulting 'causality' in no way scattered the crowd. It took all of fifty rounds of splattering machine-gun fire (in the air) to do the job. Right and left, over walls, through doorways, into windows the mob flew, myself well in the vanguard. Occupants of houses in the vicinity protested. They protested and were all but thrown out into the street themselves. In the confusion I found my way to the attic window of the house I had invaded and thus had a grand-stand seat at the show that followed.

Right here, though, I would warn the reader looking for facts about our civil war, not to be said overmuch by me. Remember that as a boy all my sympathies were on the side of the Republicans. From the scraps of talk I had gathered outside the gates I understood that the Free State soldiers were on their way to lay siege to the town but that the 'boys' were not going to make fight. They were evacuating both the town and barracks they had occupied without resistance for several months. Though puzzled at this running away, I was staunch to my side. They could do no wrong. Not even when they set fire to the splendid barracks before leaving, could I find it in my heart to rail against them.

Our barracks, and I mean the plural as we had one on either side of the Hill, were for many years the mainspring of life in a town that had no industries, no factories, no enterprise of any kind. If shopkeeper and tradesmen flourished it was because of the barracks. If humble men could send their sons through college it was the barracks that paid. Army contracts for bread, boots, meat, fuel, meant weekly payrolls for hundreds of families and this would hold good no matter what army was in occupation. When the I.R.A. burned our barracks they all but burned the town itself.

And from my vantage point in that attic, like some super-war-correspondent, I watched the first licking flames sweep up the walls of the gymnasium. I saw those civilian soldiers, in their trench-coats and bandoliers, many of them reared on barrack money, pass along the petrol that was to blast our once great garrison town out of existence and leave behind a few streets and shops to care for the needs of a handful of griping hinterland farmers.

First the gymnasium, then the cookhouse, then the stables and on to the married quarters; across the Square the doors of the immaculate officers' quarters were kicked open, doused in petrol and set alight. It was very simple. From my attic window just outside the gates I saw how simple it all was. The administration buildings, the numbered and lettered blocks of privates' and N.C.Os.' buildings, these made the square ring of flame and smoke complete. From further away, on the other side of the playing fields, there came an explosion that nearly shook me off my perch—it was the powder magazine.

In all, the job must not have taken half an hour. Then the gates were thrown open and the retreat began. I use the word retreat because that is the military term for running away and not to convey any orderliness, expediency or strategy in their going. The gates were thrown open, a few staff cars and lorries rushed out, while the remainder of the men made cross-country for the hills as best they could. On the way out of town however, some detachments were told off to complete the night's work. They must have been sound, thorough men because soon there was a new brightness in the evening sky as the military hospital and hotel-like Soldiers' Home went up in flames.

How long I stayed up there at that attic window I cannot say. I was fascinated by this thing, this destruction. There was no one to fight the flames and so they careered and crashed from one building to another. The fire was spreading all the time: my own body was bathed in sweat before I noticed that the people were all leaving their houses and moving back out of range of the flames. My fascination was at once swallowed up in my fear and I raced down the stairs and out into the baking air of the street. As I joined the crowd, some woman caught me by the shoulders and almost shook my head off.

"Get out o' here, you little caffler, before you're burned to death," she cried at me. "Go home and don't have your poor mother worrying about you on a night like this."

When I escaped out of her grasp I scurried to the edge of the crowd and there thought over what the woman had said. Slowly I moved away from the scene.

The further away I went, the more fearsome and majestic the fire became as my range took in the New and Old Barracks, the Home and Hospital. Backwards I walked all the way across the bridge, up the quay, along the Cork road and home.

There was no one in the house however, and out I came again. In a little group of people on the chapel steps I saw my mother. They had a gallery view of the whole thing. Then along a side street leading to our house I caught the sound of marching. There was no mistaking the tramp, tramp of military men. Unconsciously I braced myself only to relax in disgust as the squadron rounded the corner. It was Jackie at the head of a gang of eleven-year-olds. By his swagger and the way his left hand rested on the hilt of his sword I knew instantly who he was supposed to be. He was D'Artagnan of the Three Musketeers.

There was no going to bed that night. With the Republican Army gone and the Free Staters not yet arrived, the town was without police. Public-house keepers saw no reason to close at the customary hours. It was like Bonfire Night on a gigantic scale. From every street, laneway and passage the burning could be seen. It seemed at times that all the northern sky was ablaze. As yet the people did not realize that with the destruction of the barracks they were witnessing also the end of an era, if not of

plenty, at least of sufficiency. And so, well into the small hours of the morning the great spectacle continued. When it was all over the solid citizen went to bed and left whatever salvaging there was to the poor.

Only a few of the outlying huts and buildings were still standing but when the Free State army, uniformed and orderly, arrived at daybreak, not even the wallpaper was left to adorn the walls. Everything big and small that might be of use in a home had vanished.

One of the first acts of the new commandant was to issue a proclamation that all property taken from the barracks was to be returned at once. And my mother's private war with the army had begun.

The officer did really knock but my mother was slow in answering, so, next thing we knew, there he was, spreading his long bony legs all over the kitchen and attended by two armed privates. They tried their best to look fierce and indeed, where I was concerned, they succeeded. I slid in under the table and stayed there. My mother faced them—not only faced them, but glared at them.

"Well, Mister Captain Jimeen Joyce, even if you can't read or write, I'm nearly sure you can talk."

The anger in the officer's face crept slowly down to his hands. He unhooked the holster straps at his thighs and eased two ugly mausers in their beds. I sidled closer against the furthest table-leg.

"It is well known, Mrs. Finnigan, at headquarters, that your sympathies are with the Irregulars so I'd advise you to be civil with the army or—"

My mother's foot stamped on the floor.

"State your business in my house and—"

"I want a chest of drawers, taken from the barracks and now in your possession."

Now it was my mother's turn to be speechless. At length she stammered: "A chest o' drawers?"

Despite her first jibe however, the officer was no fool.

"I can understand how relieved you must be Ma'am, with two brothers on the run and me only interested in a chest o' drawers. Now if you'll show me where it is, I'll not trouble you any longer."

My mother was always reckoned a wise, sensible woman, but for once her wisdom deserted her. Maybe it was the high-handed way of a young fellow who a few years earlier was a regular caller at our house for bread-crusts and skins for his father's pigs. Anyway she moved out of the kitchen and planted herself at the foot of the stairs.

"I stole no chest o' drawers from any barracks," she announced, and by the bark in her voice I knew she was in a contrary mood.

"Look, Ma'am, whether you stole it or bought it makes no difference. 'Tis government property and our duty to collect it."

"You'll take no furniture out o' my house, Jimeen Joyce, neither to-night nor tomorrow night."

"'Tis stolen property, Ma'am."

"If it is same, I didn't steal it."

"I'm not saying you did."

"Your poor mother was a good, clean, honest woman and if 'twasn't for the drop—"

"We're not talking about my mother, Mrs. Finnigan. I've come to collect a chest of drawers. I mean to do my duty."

"Not from this house, you won't."

"We'll see about that. Come on men, search upstairs."

The stairs was narrow. My mother retreated to the third step.

"Nobody is going to search my bedrooms," she threatened, pushing the leading soldier in the face. He howled and fell back on his comrade's bayonet. From my place under the table I could see the soldiers though my mother was out of sight. I suddenly became very brave at the thought that they might beat her. I left my hiding place and grabbed a poker.

"For the last time, Ma'am, are you going to allow us to search this house?"

"Show me your warrant then. You have a search-warrant, I suppose?"

"It's orders, Ma'am. I need no warrant only the commandant's orders. Out o' my way now or—"

"Just put your hand on me, Joyce, and believe me you'll pay dear for it. Let *me* give you an order now—get out o' my house."

How long they just stood there glaring at each other I cannot say, but, even before the officer spoke again, I felt that it was my mother's round.

"Alright, Mrs. Finnigan, alright for now. Because I know you for a decent woman I'll not lay my hands on you, but remember, you'll answer to Commandant Barry."

"I will and I'll answer to General McEoin too. But remember yourself, you'll get no chest o' drawers."

"We'll get it Ma'am, wait and see. Come on, men."

With much rattling of arms and nailed boots, they tumbled out of the house.

I was at home also on the following evening when a long slate-coloured staff car pulled up outside our door. I answered a polite knock. It was the Commandant himself and Captain Joyce. Small, fat, happy-looking, the commanding officer wouldn't harm a child, I thought, and let him in. He shook hands with my mother and was all smiles and apologies as he explained how the Republican forces of Mr. de Valera were illegal and so had no right to give away government property. He was frightfully sorry if he caused any inconvenience but would my mother be a good woman and see that there would be no more unpleasantness. His troops had a very ugly job in rounding up all this looted stuff, he confided. There was hardly a bed in what was left of the barracks

and it would be some time before things could be brought back to normal again. As he stopped to take another long breath, my mother cut in.

"The chest of drawers is mine. I paid for it and neither by threat nor plawmause will you get it out of this house."

Wrinkle by wrinkle and tooth by tooth, the smile backed out of his face and he drew himself up as high as his five feet four would allow.

"My dear woman," he lectured, "you must know that I have only condescended to come here at the request of Captain Joyce, not to plead with you but to explain in a gentlemanly manner why your loot along with all the rest has got to be returned. Now see that it's ready by ten in the morning. My men will have a lorry at the door. Good evening to you, Madam."

But my mother caught his sleeve before he could leave.

"One minute, Mister, before you go. Will you follow me upstairs."

The Commandant was puzzled now but he followed her, as did the captain and myself. First she showed him into our room and gestured towards the chest of drawers used by Jackie and me. It was a plain old thing, camouflaged to look like mahogany. Then she led the way to her own room and pointed to the one from the barracks. There was a ring of triumph in her voice when she spoke.

"Mister Commandant, if you can swear which of these chests o' drawers belongs to you and the government and is your property—if you can prove which is yours—why I'll take it down and put it into your car right now."

Commandant and aide turned and trooped down the stairs; my mother and I followed. Just then the front door was thrown open and in dashed Jackie, accoutered as usual in helmet and sword. There was a scared look on his face as he stopped before the Commandant. He was stuttering something I didn't exactly hear though I did catch the words "priest," "confession" and "restitution." Then he unbuckled the sword, drew off the helmet and pushed them towards the bewildered and angry officer.

"Honest, Sir," he mumbled, "that's all I took."

There was a crash as the Commandant slashed the things to the ground and all but ran from the house. I don't really know what became of the chest o' drawers over the years but, somehow or other, that rusty sword and dented helmet are still lying around my mother's house.

TEMPLE LANE

WHITE MAGIC

The first day of deep snow when
Cold, pain and servitude
Tugged heart to ribs each moment
I wielded spade and broom,
I looked between the house-roofs
(God keep us from all harm)
Where sun by cloud cold-shouldered
Had drawn the compass-arms.

In geometric shadow
(While in the robe-of-Mary-
blue floated a moon feather
Left over when the night
Bed-making shook its pillows)
I walked a crackling circle,
That Christ the Knight of white souls
Might guard me from the Goat.

Then were my eyes enlightened ;
My feet were wings swan-feathered
In flight to open country ;—
Like thaw-drops were my chains.
So I became again
The young pure girl, disdaining
A beast-head, bearded, mounted
On half-door in a glen.

Judge then if my cleansed heart,
Chaste as snow-evened meadow,
Could beckon in to tread
Angels, no other partner,—
God's noon-hand orb'd the sun ;
And not the tawny fog-bank
Would blight my soul with famine
In that sure kingdom come

ROBERT GIBBINGS

THE PERFECT WIFE

*(A fable from France, transmogrified into the
Anglo-Irish idiom)*

IT isn't so long since there was a man by the name of Timmy O'Riordan who, along with his wife Mary Kate, was living in a small cottage in the country.

"Timmy," says she to him one day, "we're poor, and it looks like we'll stay poor unless we do something about it. Why wouldn't you do like Paddy Mac beyond, and drive a few bargains? He's at it all the time and his pockets are full."

"How would I drive a bargain?" asked Timmy, who had never done more in his life than give help on a farm.

"Easy enough, man. 'Tis only to change what you have for what you haven't."

"Maybe I'd lose in the deal, and what would you say then?" said Timmy.

"Did I ever say a hard word to you whatever you did? Look here," says Mary, "we have the pig. Take him along with you, and do a bit of trade with him."

Timmy set out to do as he was told. He tied a bit of rope to a hind leg of the pig and drove the animal before him down the road. He hadn't gone far before he met a man with an old nanny goat.

"Where are ye off to, Timmy?"

"I'm going bargaining."

"And with what are ye trading?"

"The pig, to be sure."

"Don't go another step. Take the goat instead."

"Begod, 'tis a deal," said Timmy. He handed over the pig and went on his way with the goat.

"Where are you going, Timmy?" said a man who carried a goose in a sack over his shoulder.

"Bargaining," said Timmy. "I gave the old pig for the goat."

"Faith then, you must keep that up. Would you change the goat for the goose?"

"I would," said Timmy, and with that he went off with the goose. Before no time at all he'd changed it with another man for a cock. And then as he reached the town he saw an old woman scraping up manure from the road.

"Would you make much of a day with that, Mam?" he asked.

"Fair enough," says she.

"Would you take the cock for the bucket full?" he said.

"I would," says she.

So Timmy, with his bucket of manure, stood at the street corner wondering what to do next. Who should come up to him but

Paddy Mac his neighbour, the wealthy one.

"Wisha, Timmy," says he, "what are ye doing here?"

"The same as yourself—bargaining," said Timmy.

"And how's the luck?" said Paddy.

"I gave the pig for a goat," said Timmy.

"What'll Mary Kate say to that?"

"She'll be happy enough. And I gave the goat for a goose, and the goose for a cock."

"What'll Mary Kate say to that?"

"She'll be happy enough. And I changed the cock for this manure."

"D'ye know," said Paddy, "I wouldn't like to be in your place when you get home. You'll have the warm night of it, I'm thinking."

"And why so?" said Timmy. "She'll be happy enough."

"I wouldn't say so," said Paddy.

"Would you have a bet on it?" said Timmy.

"I'd bet you ten pounds," said Paddy.

"Begor, that's a lot of money," said Timmy.

"Will you take it?" asked Paddy.

"I will then," said Timmy.

So the two of them together went back to Timmy's cottage.

"And how did ye get on?" asked Mary Kate when they'd arrived.

"Grand entirely," said Timmy. "I changed the pig for a goat."

"Nothing better," said Mary. "We never had enough scraps for the pig."

"But I gave the goat for a goose."

"And weren't you wise, all the same. We wanted a few feathers for the bed."

"But I changed the goose for a cock."

"Better than ever. He'll wake us early. 'Time saved is money won'."

"But I changed the cock for this manure."

"Well! Aren't you the sensible man? 'Twill be grand for the garden."

"Say no more," said Paddy. "Here's the ten pounds. Only one thing I'll say to ye. Never change herself, for there isn't another like her in the world."

Paddy went out at the door.

"'Tis a great price altogether you've brought for the pig," said Mary Kate to her husband.

DESMOND CLARKE

A BITTER DOSE

“**W**ILL they ever get it out, mummy?” the child asked tearfully and very anxiously. She repeated the question monotonously and insistently, her face close to the window and her gaze fixed steadily on the feebly struggling cow, wallowing deeper and deeper in an ever-widening bog-hole.

“Oh, I’m sure they will,” her mother kept telling her, and she too watched a little anxiously while the men outside struggled stubbornly to drag the almost disappearing cow from the bog-hole.

She saw the men straining on a rope tied about the cow’s horns and another man had the beast grasped firmly by the tail. As the men pulled and struggled they slipped and slithered about on the soft marshy ground, sinking into it and feeling about for fresh and firmer footholds; then they started again to pull and drag the beast out. All the while their muffled shouts were beating incoherently against the window.

“Look, mummy, the poor cow. Will it die, mummy?” the child asked.

“I am sure they will get it out,” the child’s mother said again, and then when the tearful voice grew more anxious she said, “I think you should run into the kitchen and play, dear.”

The child said nothing for a while but pressed her face hard against the window and watched intently, the little face harassed and anxious.

Then the men began to move and the muffled noise of their shouting grew louder. The great bulk of the cow appeared to rise out of the wet soggy ground as if it were being forced up from below.

The child’s anxious expression grew expectant and her eyes opened wider. Then she jumped about joyfully, clapped her hands excitedly together. “Hurrah!” she cried. “Hurrah! They’ve got it out, mummy! They’ve got it out!”

She stood at the window again and watched the frightened, shivering cow standing dejectedly on the grassy sward of the bordering road. The cow was bathed in the brown muddy ooze of the bog, miserable and bedraggled with its muddy coating dripping off in thick dirty blobs.

For a moment the child turned her attention to the sweating muck-spattered men who stood around, their shirt-sleeves rolled up, their arms filthy with dirty bog water, and their boots and trouser ends thick with clauber. The soggy peaty ground beyond the road was churned and puddled, and a lake of water lay where the cow had been, pocked about with little wells of water where the men’s feet had sunken deeply.

“ ’Twill die of the cold if they don’t take it home quickly,” the

child said, a fresh anxiety creeping into her voice.

"They can't move it yet a while," her mother told her.

"Why not, mummy? It should have a warm bed."

"I expect it is tired and weak after all that struggle and couldn't walk far."

The child watched the patient, shivering beast, wet and forlorn looking, and the knot of men around it. Some of the men were wiping the brown mud from the beast's sides with wisps of grass and flags. The men appeared to be arguing, discussing what should be done with the cow.

"They should bring it home now," the child said again, the same anxious note in her voice.

Her mother stirred beside her. She suddenly remembered seeing men before dragging a cow in a pitiable condition from a bog-hole, and somebody poured whiskey down the animal's throat. She crossed the room to the cupboard beside the wall. There were four bottles of stout in it. They had been there for some time, grown stale and bitter, flat possibly and hardly drinkable.

"Get me the basket from the kitchen, dear," she told the child, as she gathered the bottles in her arm.

The child fetched the basket.

"What are you going to do, mummy?" she asked.

"I've some medicine for the cow," her mother answered brightly. "Some medicine that will warm it and make it well again."

"Warm it?" the child asked, incredulous.

"Yes, of course."

"Goody!" the child cried, her eyes dancing. "Will I bring it out, mummy?" The child was jumping excitedly. "Let me bring it, do mummy. It will make the cow well again, won't it mummy?"

"Wait a moment, dear. I'll give it to you." The mother having first drawn the corks and replaced them loosely placed the bottles in the basket.

The child rushed back to the window. The knot of men about the cow had not moved and the beast stood as forlorn and dejected as ever, a slimy silvery stream drelling from its open hanging mouth.

"Hurry, mummy. Hurry," the child said, reaching for the basket.

"Wait a moment, dear." Her mother was impatient.

"But the cow, mummy. I'm sure it will die. It is sick, very sick."

"Don't be silly," her mother said, and she walked over to the window.

Some of the men were rubbing the cow vigorously, others stood around wiping the sweat from their faces with the backs of their muck-stained hands.

"Here, dear, and be careful not to spill it." The mother

handed the basket to the child who rushed out picking her hurried steps carefully.

When the child reached the knot of men a sudden shyness enveloped her and she stood still for a moment looking from the men to the cow. Then she stepped a little closer, slowly, hesitantly, and laid the basket on the ground close to the cow's head. Timidly she muttered a few words about medicine for the cow, but the words were lost to the men. She stepped back a pace or two vainly trying to form words, a puzzled and anxious little frown disfiguring her face, and she thought if they don't give the cow the medicine soon it would surely die. She wanted to run back and get her mother to come and tell the men what to do, tell them quickly before the cow died. She took a quick glance at the cow and screwed her face tearfully.

Then she saw one of the men take a bottle from the basket and draw the cork with his teeth. A thin little smile came to her face. The man sniffed the uncorked bottle doubtfully and as he put it to his lips the smile fell from her face. She saw him throw his head back and there was a noisy gurgling sound from him. Immediately there was a hurried scuffling and shoving about and around the basket as many hands reached into it; the men pushed and jostled one another like rough children scrambling for fallen coins.

The child stepped back out of the way and kept saying "Cow! Cow!" and pointing to the docile beast standing woodenly where the men had left it, unattended, whilst they grabbed the bottles of stout.

The men ignored the child while they thirstily drank from the bottles which they passed from one to another, and wiped the backs of their hands across their mouths and chins.

Clenching and unclenching her little fists the child ran towards them. "It's for the cow," she cried. "It's for the cow! Please, mister. Please."

The men dropped the empty bottles one by one into the basket, but the little girl was gone, running towards the house crying "Mummy! Mummy! Mummy!" as if her heart would break.

EWART MILNE

JOE REMINISCENT

Come out, Joe Reminiscent, said the Island child,
And tell me several tales known from Sligo to Rathdrum.
Warm my cold belly with songs of plenty on the hungry pavements
While you make up new words for tunes that are always the same.

But Joe Reminiscent sat in his stone house and stared
And stared at his four white walls long enough,
Someone else had told the tales before and sung the ballads.
But if he could paint he'd show the Island child a fine sight.

Come in then, honey, said Joe Reminiscent from his low stool,
We'll not go with tall tales nor beg the singing miles today.
But see if you can find some crayons that should be knocking about
And we'll draw the glories of the world before it passes away.

So they hunted in the chest of drawers where everything was kept
Till they found a black crayon, with others of different hue,
Then Joe Reminiscent began to draw on the white white walls :
He drew a young girl by a well, a wheelbarrow and a sloe tree.

The Island child looked with all his young old eyes
And they went on like that for a day, a night and a day,
And soon three walls were alive with town and country years
But the fourth wall Joe left for the desperate third day.

When they were famished to death he blacked the fourth wall
For night deep hung with stars of blue and man faced bats,
And the Island child looked and dreamed and life was a dream
And Joe Reminiscent was a dream and the Island child.

Then Joe Reminiscent rose up and lifted the dead in his arms
And strode across the rush floor and through the glory walls,
He borrowed a wheelbarrow and wheeled the Island child to a sloe
tree
And buried him where no young girl going to a well might see.

From that day Joe Reminiscent drew only still lives,
Potatoes flowered on his walls and a masterly onion bed,
When he sang it was to the barnacle geese going over the mountain,
When he had a tale it was to hint darkly at five or six foreign wives

MICHAEL CAMPBELL

CARTER AND McCracken

OWEN lay on his stomach in the warm sunlight that spread over the green carpet. He cast the dice again. Six and four!

The Bentley, a closed coupé, came again past the sports Alvis. It was cut from "The Motor", pasted on to cardboard and with a stand at the back. It moved perhaps not quite the full ten lengths, for the Bentley being closed in and black was sinister and therefore driven by the villain, a man named Carter. Rattle, rattle... the black dice again bumped over the green expanse. Two and one. Heaven above, the Alvis, a glossy model from a back page of the "Sphere", was now far behind. Owen gave it three good lengths, which was generous because it was longer than the Bentley. He consoled himself with the knowledge that the driver, whose friendly and courageous name was Bill McCracken, a new one to Owen, was merely biding his time for the final lap when he would come again with a vicious burst of speed. There was little time, however, because the Bentley, with five and three, was turning at the deep crack in the carpet and coming back for a final dash down the room to where the flaky wooden door of the french windows met the well-tacked carpet. Come on McCracken! Come on Bill! Five and five. Hooray! He too had turned and was now in eager pursuit of the Bentley. Carter's goggled face with a black moustache was glancing round now from the evil black sedan, and McCracken—Owen preferred surnames—was cheerfully waving a fist in defiance and bending down again over the steering-wheel.

Owen yawned. He was bored to death. Dice were inhuman things. He took the Bentley and the Alvis and creating their noise, a roar that rose in a crescendo as they came past the stands and pits, he found to his delight that the Alvis breasted the Bentley and, to the rejoicing of everyone, except Carter who was soon to slink away ignominiously, came past by half a length to strike the rim of the french windows with its shiny front mudguards. He did not care that the cardboard front was dented. All interest had fled.

It was half past five and the sun was as hot as ever, making the room extremely stuffy. Much as Owen preferred being indoors where there was scope for invention, he had to get out to breathe. The glass door opened on to a verandah that was covered with honeysuckle and virginia creeper, over which Owen peered down on to the grass and the flower-beds below. His mother, Mrs. Kennedy, in a big hat, and Mrs. Trelorne were in deck-chairs, holding parasols and idly saying things which he could not hear. The tea-things were still on the table. Owen had spent five minutes on tea. He could not bear the chatter of his brother and sister

and their friends who were now playing tennis on the lawn in front of the house. They made such rotten jokes and were so silly and his mother, heaven knows why, seemed to scare them. If they had nothing to say they should keep quiet. His mother and Mrs. Trelorne were almost certainly talking about chintzes—whatever they might be—or else about a new way to do rabbits.

As he watched, Julia came out in cap and apron and went over the grass to get the tea-things. Unreal somehow, she walked on the grass as if it were breakable, and she glanced up at the sun in a startled way. Owen watched her sharply. Recently there had been talk about Julia. She was suspected of stealing. Julia, who was aged twenty-three, a recent arrival, was therefore a criminal. Watching now, Owen felt himself contaminated. Twice she came out and went back into the basement.

It occurred to him that to-day was Wednesday and Ellen must be there too, the cook, Mary, having a half-day. How to see Ellen without Julia? He decided to go down to the kitchen and risk meeting Julia alone. He went back into the sitting-room, into the hall and thence down the kitchen stairs. They descended in darkness, and the fear came upon him that Julia might come up, or might be waiting at the bottom round the corner. He rushed the last few steps and turned rapidly, shielding himself with an arm. There was no one. He was in a dark corridor. He tiptoed on the stone flags into the kitchen where Julia was sitting by the kitchen-range reading a grease-stained newspaper. He coughed. She looked up. He asked.

"Where's Ellen?"

"She's not here," replied Julia. She looked pale, rather pathetic, and you would never guess she was a criminal unless you knew. The stove was blazing hot, and it was dark in the basement: you would never guess it was a summer's day.

Julia examined him for a moment.

"She's upstairs," she said.

"Thanks," he replied, and left quickly. He was terrified that as he mounted the stairs he would hear her calling him back, but he heard nothing. He ran across the hall with his heart thumping and upstairs again. He stopped on the landing, hearing something in the first bedroom, his brother's. He tiptoed to the door and saw that Ellen was sitting on the windowsill polishing the outside of the window. Immediately she was Carter. She was Carter and she was heavily armed, probably with a six-shooter. She, or rather he, had committed at least three bloody murders and now he was caught, by Bill McCracken. Sadistic he was as he thought just how beautifully he had caught Carter, just how painfully if only he had a whip or cat-o'-nine-tails, he would make Carter howl. In any event Carter was as good as dead, riddled with bullets.

He jumped into the room and shouted, "Stick 'em up!" and as he did so he reflected in but a flash that Ellen was a brick,

that she never let you down. She was quick enough not merely to control her fright but to put on a false fright that was in fact far more real to them both. She would look aghast and trembling: this was right. Had she screamed or fainted it would have been stupid. It was not what Carter would do. Ellen knew. Sometimes he thought that he would explain to her, tell her that she *was* Carter, but that would be expecting too much. It was enough that in practice she knew it. So that was why he screamed at an old woman on a window-sill sixty feet above the ground.

Her heart plunged and for a moment she thought she had really fallen. She took hold of the window-frame, however, and as instinctively as this put the other hand to her heart, feigning a look of wild terror and exclaiming,

"Glory be to God! You're not goin' to kill me are you?"

Dismissing, as always, the suspicion that Carter would not talk with an Irish accent, he seized a pipe from his brother's pipe-rack, levelled it at her through the glass and said, "I probably am. You've certainly asked for it."

She cowered before him.

"Oh please, sir, please don't kill me."

"We'll see," he said, walking up and down. She should not have said 'sir', but this was an error which he had long ago accepted, eventually coming to believe that Carter was as servile even as this.

Sitting on the windowsill, her legs under an apron, she dipped her rag again into the bucket of hot water. Ellen always went on with what she was doing. She had to, in the end. They both knew it made no difference. They were still who they were.

He stopped walking and looked at her. Her face was red and perspiring. Strands of grey hair had come out of her bun and she pushed them away from her eyes with the back of her fat hand, which was red and swollen. He wondered why, though she looked horrible and he would have hated her to touch him, he liked to be near her. There was a definite Ellen smell. He liked this too. There was something consoling about her, something that he found in no one else.

"I'll tell you one thing," he said. "You've asked for it. The sheriff's after you too. I just happened to get here a bit faster. I guess I know the way better."

"Haven't you a better horse too?" she asked, cajoling.

"Of course I have," he said, only half deceived. "I've a chestnut colt."

Ellen watched him through the rainbow circles that her rag was making on the window-pane. He was a small boy in a red blazer with ginger hair standing on end. He was the only person in the house who gave a damn for her. The sun beating on her back made her feel faint. She had not felt well all day, weak, and tired. It was drowsy. In a daze she heard the pigeons cooing over in the garden next door. In her mind she saw herself

a limp mass down on the grass. Mrs. Trelorne screamed, but Mrs. Kennedy, Owen's mother, rushed round to the front of the house and called out, "Ellen's fallen out of the window." They came running and carried her inside. An ambulance arrived. Mrs. Kennedy went with her, sitting beside her, asking questions, fussing. But Ellen was smiling inwardly: she knew that there was nothing whatever wrong with her and that the fool of a woman was being taken in.

"Of course," said Owen, "I might hand you over to Jim Butler."

"And who might he be?" she asked.

"He's my buddy," he replied. "He knows all about torturing."

He knew well that there was no torturing in the Wild West, but at times one had to make things up for Ellen: otherwise she would be lost, even she.

"Oh, please, don't do that," she begged. "I'll do anything, anything."

But he was dreadfully bored and prayed for something new and exciting to happen. How? He picked up one of his brother's golf-balls and rolled it along the carpet. It rattled on the wood. There was a cry outside. Ellen said, "Your mother wants you."

He went to the other window and called down, "What do you want?"

"Come here and I'll tell you," said his mother without looking up.

"Blast and damn!" he exclaimed, coming back into the room.

"Tch, tch!" said Ellen.

Owen came out into the garden and stood in front of his mother and Mrs. Trelorne.

"Owen, be an angel," said his mother, "there's a letter to Uncle Philip on the table in the hall. Would you take it to the letter-box on the corner before the post goes?"

"I suppose so," he said.

"Thanks, darling."

Owen got his bicycle out of the garage and with the letter in his hand went down the drive which was just long enough to include the tennis-court where the four white figures jumped about and shouted. There were people in their shirt-sleeves, family parties idling along, Mother pushing the pram and the children who could walk sucking lollipops and getting in the way. The letter-box was in the wall beside the Corner Shop, which had everything in the window from baby-clothes to Coca Cola. He saw three girls inside, so he stood and examined the window. There was a red racing car. He could imagine that it might belong to McCracken and perhaps even Carter—though it was not black—yet nothing more. Compared with his models it was a dud.

He rang his bell furiously. A fox-terrier ran at him. He tore away and in through his home gate, speeding up to the house. He reflected that if people are going to play tennis they should

play it without chattering. Going in he passed Julia in the hall, heading for the dining-room to lay the table for dinner. Ellen must be downstairs alone. She would be putting on her hat and coat and going home at any moment. It occurred to Owen that she had robbed a bank and that he had got her where he wanted her. He crept down the dark kitchen stairs on tiptoe, his heart thumping.

At the bottom, standing in the dark stone corridor, he listened. There was no sound in the kitchen, but he heard a noise, as if of tinkling glass, in the room beyond. This was the pantry. Light came through the open door and shone into the corridor. He crept down the passage, feeling the wall with his hand, until he was almost in the beam of light. He was trembling. Taking a breath, he stepped forward into the doorway and let out a shout of, "Stick 'em up!"

For a moment they were dumbstruck. Ellen half-raised her hands, looking at him without recognition. Owen stared. He was looking at what was in her hand. It was a wineglass, one of his mother's precious wineglasses. Ellen had been in the act of putting it away into the brown attaché-case that she always carried to work.

As soon as he understood Owen wanted to run, but he could not move. She shrugged her shoulders in a queer way, put the glass into the case and snapped it shut. Then she looked at him, and into her face came an expression that he had never seen before, a cruel expression. She came towards him with the bag in one hand, and with the other fat red hand she seized him by the lapels of his blazer and shook him back and forth. She said, "You're never goin' to tell anyone about this, d'ye hear? D'ye hear me?"

He nodded his head.

"Come next door," she snapped. She gripped him by the arm and led him into the kitchen. Standing together near the crackling range she put her red-veined face and watery green eyes up to his face and said, "We've never told anyone about Us, have we?"

"No," he whispered.

"So there's no reason to tell them now. See?"

"Yes."

"If you do, you little swine," she went on, jabbing a finger in his chest, "I'll have my revenge on you, be sure of that!"

He shivered and could not even struggle in her grip. This was no longer Ellen, nor was it Carter . . . and he was a long way from being McCracken.

She was about to speak again when the red rushed out of her face and she turned white. Staggering, she groped behind her for a chair and panting in a terrifying way she sat down. After several moments she stopped panting. She was less formidable. He said, greatly curious, and for the instant forgetting that she had almost collapsed in front of him, "Why did you want it?"

"Want what, child, want what?" she asked in a tired way.

"The glass."

"I don't want it, child."

She saw his bewildered face.

"I want to make fools of them, child, bloody fools of them."

She looked at him, almost friendly—if this monster could be said to be friendly—and as if *he* would understand. Owen did not understand. She was vile. She was so vile that he must watch her and could not move. She looked cunning and horrible again.

"Poor old Ellen is not so poor as they think," she said, looking round as if someone might hear. "For twenty years it's been 'poor old Ellen.' It was the same with your Aunt Dollie. But they forgot she left me two hundred a year. You know where it is now?"

"No."

"It's at home, in a case, under me bed. Near five thousand pound!"

She took his arm and made him stand near her. Her straying hairs and the smell of her—she was sweating—made a disgust rise up in him, but he could not stir.

"For twenty years," she whispered, "I've fooled the lot of them. If you could see my little room . . . but they'll all see it when I'm gone, all right. I've two dozen glasses there. And I've two sets of crockery, and more of your precious mother's jewellery than she ever remembers she had, and silver spoons, and the gold crest your mother thought was burnt in the fire. Fool that she is! Poor old Ellen wasn't poor at all, d'ye see? She's as rich as Herself, richer!"

She started to breathe painfully and gripped the table with one hand. He seized the moment and rushing wildly out of the kitchen, stumbled up the dark stairs and shouted, "Mother, Mother!" when he was still in the hall. Outside he dashed up to his mother and Mrs. Trelorne and cried out, "Mother, quickly, quickly, come quickly."

"What on earth, Owen?"

"Ellen, Ellen, it's Ellen."

His mother rose and went with him. He did not mean to return, but he could not stop himself. In the hall they were joined by Julia, who had heard his cries, and they went downstairs, his mother in front. He had the sensation that they were tracking down a dangerous beast, and he kept well in the rear.

Ellen was still in the chair where he had left her. His mother said, "Ellen, what's the trouble?"

Ellen looked at her with a contemptuous expression which to her indicated merely that Ellen was unwell.

"Nothing," she replied. She rose with an effort and put on her coat which was lying on the table. She had not looked at Owen.

"Julia," said her mistress, "run and fetch some brandy out of the cupboard in the dining-room."

"I'm all right," said Ellen testily.

Owen, watching her in terror, realised that without thinking he had lifted her case off the table in order to give it to her. She saw this, looked slyly at him, and said in her cajoling way, "Thank you, Master Owen."

He gave it into her hands. It was not from fear. It was as if there was something between them that could not be denied.

Julia came with the brandy, and his mother, in the voice she always used for servants, said to Ellen, handing her the glass, "Drink this down, now, and you'll be better."

"Oh, no, ma'am," said Ellen, "I never touch a drop."

"Go on, do as I tell you," said Mrs. Kennedy, "you'll feel much better."

Ellen took the glass roughly and drank the brandy.

"Thank you, ma'am," she said, "thank you very much."

"You shouldn't really go until I get the doctor," said his mother. For twenty years she had looked after Ellen. It had been one of the crosses in her life. She wondered now if she should give Ellen some money: continual payments were an unspoken agreement between them.

"Not at all, ma'am, not at all," said Ellen. "I'm as right as rain. I'll be goin' now."

She put on her black hat and was assisted by his mother to the stairs. Owen listened to them going away. Julia was with him. He looked at her directly for the first time. She seemed young and comforting and he wanted to throw his arms around her and cry and tell her everything. He did not do this. She went to put coal on the fire. Still he waited, hearing the two voices fading up the stairs. Julia turned and looked at him sympathetically, "Poor old Ellen," she said.

Owen did not reply. He left the kitchen and went above. A terrible sense of guilt had overtaken him. He had helped. He had held the case in his hands. He felt dirty and guilty. He went as if without thinking upstairs to the bathroom where the wretched sun was still making everything bright and hot, and he ran the cold water into the basin. He plunged his hands in and splashed the water all over his face and hair, and he seemed to be washing away at least some of his sin. He went along the corridor and into the sitting-room. He was not crying; his face was wet and cold. On the carpet he saw the Bentley and the Alvis—Carter and McCracken. They were two bits of paper—nothing more. He walked over to them, over the green carpet, and crushed them flat with his foot, one after the other.

GEORGE FITZMAURICE: SKETCH FOR A PORTRAIT

A MERRY little man, you might say: a man who carries his years lightly and seems to have not a care in the world. He appears to have little liking for the veneer, the surface glitter of civilisation, for cinemas and lounge bars; but in his favourite position with his elbow on the counter of a pub and a glass of stout in his free hand, he will talk entertainingly on a variety of matters—of the noble hooded cloaks handed down from generation to generation in Valentia and Bandon, of fairs and funerals in Killorglin and Abbeyfeale, of the decline of the “visiting houses” and the old way of life in his native Kerry, and of the great days of the old-time music-hall. Perhaps, from his reminiscences of Dublin at the turn of the century, you will gather that he knew the leading figures of the literary revival, but as to his own story and his own part in that revival, it is as easy to interview an oyster.

This is the man of whom Ernest Boyd said in 1918: “George Fitzmaurice has imagination and style of a sufficiently personal quality to give him rank as the greatest folk-dramatist since the death of Synge” (*The Contemporary Drama of Ireland*). Against the background of the Abbey playwrights of that time, it was a reasonable claim, but unfortunately it was not borne out; lack of appreciation, misguidance of his talents, other causes, made him drift away from the theatre. His occasional one-act plays since 1923 have been published in *The Dublin Magazine* on their literary merits, for their dramatic qualities, with one exception, were small; they were plays in appearance only. I believe that the loss to the Irish Theatre of his potential talents was considerable.

George Fitzmaurice, eldest son of a farmer, was born some time between 1880 and 1890, in Kilcara, near Duagh in North Kerry, a land of abrupt mountains and dark glens, of scattered woods and small blue lakes, a land which still held a remnant of the ancient Gaelic civilisation. Of his early life I know nothing, but around the turn of the century he was working as a clerk in the Congested Districts Board. He was described by his companions as a sociable character, “a great man to drink a pint,” but one who was given to day-dreaming, and rambling off on his own at times. This was the period of the Irish Literary Revival. Literature and the theatre were in the air. “Everybody,” says Fitzmaurice, “was writing plays.” He wrote a full-length comedy and sent it to the Abbey in 1907, the year of *The Playboy*. Judging by the construction of his plays, I should say that his models and examples in the art of the playwright were no more than a knowledge of Shakespeare, a memory of touring companies playing *Arrah-na-pogue* and *Con the Shagreen*.

and his own fertile imagination. Besides this, he had a flair for dialogue, based on the Kerry idiom, which gladdens the ear and ennobles a character.

It might be as well to deal with the question of dialect style at this point. It was said of Synge that he merely wrote down what he heard through a crack in the floor of a loft, and Fitzmaurice even went so far as to say of himself: "sure anybody who would write down the sayings of Kerry people could fool anyone he was a poet." That, however, is only half the story: for the other half, for the artistic selection and creation which brings a "natural" line to life, I must introduce an unexpected and impartial witness—Raymond Chandler, whose remarks on style have universal application. In the course of some comments on the masters of the American detective story, he said: "Dashiell Hammett put these people down on paper as they really are, and he made them talk and think in the language they customarily used for these purposes. He had style, but his audience didn't know it, because it was in a language not supposed to be capable of these refinements. They thought they were getting a good meaty melodrama written in the kind of lingo they imagined they spoke themselves. It was in a sense, but it was much more. All language begins with speech, and the speech of common men at that, but when it develops to the point of becoming a literary medium, it only looks like speech." Change a word here and there, and that passage could be applied to any of Fitzmaurice's plays. For the sheer delight of his language, if for no other reason, his plays are worth preserving.

The full-length play which he sent to the Abbey was *The Country Dressmaker*, a sparkling comedy. It was accepted by them, and produced on 3rd October, 1907. In the policy of short runs and no revivals which was the practice of the Abbey at the time, it was something of a success. It may be a coincidence that Fitzmaurice resigned from the Congested Districts Board during the same year, but I think that there is a connection. At this period it is possible that, not having tasted discouragement, he hoped to devote his life to writing; it is fairly certain that he had strong views on his own work at this time (as a story of an argument with Yeats over the cutting of a line of dialogue would seem to prove) in contrast to his present remarkably casual attitude to productions of his plays.

During the following year, the Abbey presented his second play, *The Piedish*, a very fine one-act tragedy. Its reception must have been a terrible shock to the young dramatist. "For some reason which cannot be explained," said Andrew E. Malone, "this play was always received with hilarity in the Abbey Theatre. In no other Irish play is there elaborated the theme of the frustration of the artist in Ireland, and the struggle between the Paganism of the artist and his Christian environment. It is probable that the complete misinterpretation of this little play did much to retard the growth of appreciation which its author

deserved." And Ernest Boyd said: "This curious little piece in one act, which failed to secure the sympathies of an audience already in search of digestive amusement, was soon forgotten on the accession of the new regime of imitative peasant playwrights. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should have waited seven years before publishing his first play."

I think that the "inexplicable reason" referred to by Malone is clearly explained by Boyd's observation. Even at that early date, the Abbey audiences were determined to be amused. If their favourite comedians were appearing, the play was a riotous comedy, whatever the subject. The shock to a young and sincere author must have been brutal. There is an interesting confirmation of this point. *The Challenge*, by Winifred Letts, was produced at the Abbey on 14th October, 1909; it was her second play for the Abbey, and she was rather proud of it. In a recent article, *Early Days at the Abbey*, she says: "Yeats and Lady Gregory had approved the idea of it—the two old men who fight a duel in an old Dublin house over a wrong that one of them has entirely forgotten. It was intended for a tragedy, but the audience decided at once that Arthur Sinclair, Fred O'Donovan and Kerrigan must be engaged in a comedy, whatever they might say. As each appeared there were shrieks of laughter and the laughter barely ceased as one old man fell dead from over-excitement when the clock signalled for them to shoot. As the author, I could have prayed for the boards to rise up and cover me. Not even the sympathy of Yeats and Lady Gregory could salve the hurt of that absurd but miserable moment." Winifred Letts never again wrote a play for the Abbey.

It is hardly surprising that Fitzmaurice wrote no more for some time; possibly he went back to Kerry for a while. About 1910 he rejoined the C.D.B., now the Land Commission, and three years later (April, 1913) his curious one-act play, *The Magic Glasses*, was produced. In this play, he took refuge from misinterpretation in fantasy, in an allegory of the frustrated artist, the theme of *The Piedish* again. Ernest Boyd points out a resemblance between *The Magic Glasses* and Ibsen's *Wild Duck*—"the loft to which Jaymony retires in order to enjoy the fairy music reminds us of the garret in *The Wild Duck*, within whose shelter the old grandfather was transported to a world of the imagination."

This is not the only curious point about this curious play (which Harry Clarke chose as one of the representatives of the best in the Irish Theatre for his famous *Geneva Widow*, commissioned for the League of Nations). Some time ago, I came across a Japanese play—*The Madman on the Roof*, by Kan Kikuchi—which was almost identical in plot and treatment with *The Magic Glasses*. I asked Professor Glenn Hughes, the translator, about it, and he wrote: "I agree with you that there is an extraordinary similarity between this play and Kikuchi's. I believe however that there is a possibility of Kan Kikuchi

having seen the Fitzmaurice piece and taken his idea from it. *The Madman* was first published in 1919, and produced at the Imperial Theatre, Tokyo, in 1920. I think it was written shortly before publication. Why the author set his action as far back as 1900, I do not know. The Japanese are great thieves. Many of their plays are literally stolen from European and American works. Before they had contact with our drama they even stole from each other. They did not even consider this a reprehensible practice. You may be sure that if a copy of *The Magic Glasses*, which I note was published in 1914, managed somehow to fall into the hands of Kikuchi, there is no mystery at all in the similarity between the plays." It is an interesting speculation, suggesting that the circulation of Fitzmaurice's published works was far-flung, if not extensive, but in the absence of any further evidence, it must remain a speculation.

With the production of *The Magic Glasses*, a pattern begins to emerge—a slight encouragement, followed by a burst of play-writing industry (the incentive for writing *The Magic Glasses* was a revival of *The Country Dressmaker* in 1912); or discouragement, followed by a long silence. This pattern recurs throughout Fitzmaurice's work. In the next two years he wrote two more plays, *The Magic Glasses* having met with no opposition, if no outright success. These plays were the one-act fantasy, *The Dandy Dolls*, and the full-length play, *The Moonlighters*, a major work by the dramatic standards of that period.

The Dandy Dolls was not produced until 1945. And in January 1949, A. J. Leventhal writes in *The Dublin Magazine*: "George Fitzmaurice had to wait well over thirty years for the realisation on the stage of his play, *The Moonlighters*. It was not, as one might have expected, the Abbey Theatre that paid this belated tribute to one of the most imaginative dramatists of the revival, but an amateur company." The five plays which Fitzmaurice had written at that time were published by Maunsel and Co. in a collected edition in 1914 (they had also published *The Magic Glasses*, on its own, earlier the same year). The volume met with small sales. In a few years, the firm broke up, the unbound stocks of *Five Plays* being taken over by Veritas Ltd. and later by the Talbot Press, who issued four of the plays singly in blue paper covers. Discouragement was complete. For twenty years, with minor exceptions, Fitzmaurice was a forgotten voice.

Then, *The Country Dressmaker* was revived by the Abbey in 1942. Austin Clarke's Lyric Theatre Company produced *The Dandy Dolls* for the first time in December, 1945, and followed it with a revival of *The Magic Glasses* in 1946. *The Moonlighters* was again under consideration by the Abbey in 1947, but the project lapsed. Thus encouraged, Fitzmaurice wrote two further one-act plays, *There are Tragedies and Tragedies*, (published in *The Dublin Magazine*, September, 1948), and *One Evening Gleam* (*The Dublin Magazine*, January, 1949). He had retired from the Land Commission shortly before the

war, and since then had been living in Kerry. His lack of contact with the theatre over the long period since 1923 is well shown in these plays, which have little of dramatic interest, and will probably be remembered only by those few, who, like myself, believe that Fitzmaurice's work is of lasting importance.

The revival of interest in his work was reflected in a production of *The Magic Glasses* by an amateur company—Earlsfort Players—in September, 1947. A year later, this group presented *The Moonlighters* for the first time, as already noted. It was a laudable, but perhaps over-ambitious, venture, and the critical reception was mixed. Most authorities said that the play showed its age, and was rather confusing; *The Dublin Magazine* however, in the review already mentioned, pointed out that a professional production would have disguised the obvious faults in the play, and given full scope to the genius and vitality behind it. "The action is wedded to a dialogue that shows a mastery of what used to be called the 'Anglo-Irish' idiom, and which, in the mouths of trained actors, would have smoothed, if it did not entirely eliminate, the roughnesses of plot; the imaginative phrase deftly delivered could have shaded some of the seeming crudities of the amateur interpretation; not that Liam Miller, who both produced the play and designed the setting, was without feeling for the dramatist's purpose; it was inevitable that the untutored cast could not rise to the demands inherent in the text."

The list of productions of all those plays by Fitzmaurice which had more than merely a literary interest, was completed by the presentation of *The Linnaun Shee* by the Lyric Theatre Company in May, 1949 (followed within the week by another revival of *The Country Dressmaker*, which met with unqualified success). *The Linnaun Shee* is a gem, possibly the best one-act play ever written by Fitzmaurice. Published in *The Dublin Magazine* in 1924, it is alone among the plays after *The Moonlighters* in avoiding an exaggeration of artificially academic language on the part of one character or another. It was completely forgotten for a quarter of a century. Andrew E. Malone's definitive work, *The Irish Drama*, published in 1929, overlooks this play, while referring to an amusing trifle called *The Green Stone* (*Dublin Magazine*, 1926) in which he claims to see an indication "that George Fitzmaurice may one day give to Ireland a romantic drama such as Ibsen gave to Norway in *Peer Gynt*." This hope, unfortunately, remains unfulfilled.

The list of Fitzmaurice's plays is completed by the one-act comedy, *Twixt the Giltinans and the Carmodys*, produced at the Abbey in 1923, and eventually published in *The Dublin Magazine* in 1943. It is an extension of the match-making tangles and the stock figure of the returned Yank in *The Country Dressmaker*, but without the original touches which gave his first play its brilliance and humanity. Its cursory plot and slapdash characterisation doomed it to artistic failure, in spite of its occasional passages of delightful dialogue. "It may be," said

Malone, "that in disgust at the treatment that had been given to his finer efforts he had decided to tickle the groundlings with this play. But even in this tangle of families there is no descent to the farcical." The compromise, however, proved no gain, and was artistic suicide. With the sole exception of *The Linnaun Shee*, Fitzmaurice's work since 1914 remains of small importance, although it is possible that if any encouragement had been shown him at that critical period, he might have become one of the more important names in the history of the Irish theatre.

His present reputation rests solidly on the two full-length plays, *The Country Dressmaker*, and *The Moonlighters*. The former, as already indicated, has always been something of a success, and has been frequently revived. The plot is simple and universal, telling of Julia Shea, who has spent her life reading novelettes, and taking her views of ideal life from them; how she has built up a romantic idea of Pats Connor, gone to make his fortune in America, because her neighbours have tricked her into believing that he will return to marry her; how Pats returns and keeps up the deception, at first as a joke and then in all sincerity; how Julia at first rejects him, because he does not tally with her romantic ideal; how they are further separated by the machinations of a neighbour with marriageable daughters; and how, in the end, the complications are overcome, to the satisfaction of all concerned. It is a heartwarming play, and the character of Julia Shea, the dressmaker, who is silly and impulsive, but yet possesses a strange dignity, is a pleasure to meet. "This perfect comedy of rural manners," was Ernest Boyd's considered judgement.

The Moonlighters is a more ambitious play, but is not as smooth in construction. It deals with the troubled times of the Land War, and contrasts the characters of Peter Guerin, a "reformed" Fenian, and his son Eugene, a fiery patriot in words at least, against a background of the under-cover revolutionary activity of the time—activity which sometimes degenerated into mere faction-fights, and at other times was diverted to private vengeance under the disguise of patriotism. The keynote of the play is that there is no special pleading on behalf of one character more than another. Malachi Cantillon, the gommebeen man; Maura Driscoll and Breeda Carmody, whose love for Eugene and his friend Tom involves themselves in tragedy; Synan, the ill-fated young captain of the moonlighters; Big William Cantillon, the grabber, and Morisheen Lucy, whose land is grabbed—they are all living human beings, who carry the evidence of their own truth. We feel that these characters really existed, that the play is a true picture of the country at that time. The interest continually shifts from one character to another, which explains the apparently disjointed effect of the play. It is a poetical documentary, so to speak, with neither conventional hero nor "minor" characters.

A certain authority on Irish history told me that he objected strongly to *The Moonlighters*, because it was grossly

unfair to the ideals of the secret revolutionary organisation. A discussion of this point, involving history and politics, would be out of place here, but I cannot understand how anyone could carry away such an opinion from reading the play. For my own part, I can never read it without a catch in my throat, and I agree wholeheartedly with Malone's comment in 1929: "Why this play should never have been staged when so many that were in every way inferior were produced at the Abbey is incredible to everyone who knows it in the printed version." As we have seen, it was staged eventually. Perhaps, some day, it will be presented as it deserves to be.

Of Fitzmaurice's one-act plays, five may be grouped under Ernest Boyd's phrase—"they have neither the style nor the substance which would repay an attempt to summarise them." These are, in chronological order, *The Dandy Dolls*, *Twixt the Giltinans and the Carmody's*, *The Green Stone*, *There are Tragedies and Tragedies*, and *One Evening Gloom*. I admit frankly that I am puzzled by *The Dandy Dolls*; Boyd sees it as "an exercise in pure fancy, situate beyond the limitations of human experience . . . the narrative of a wildly grotesque struggle against the forces of the supernatural . . . the Grey Man and the Hag's Son who steal the windpipes from the throats of Roger Carmody's dolls are creatures of the same race as the Trolls of Ibsen."

The really important one-act plays are the strange trio which remain for consideration—*The Piedish*, *The Magic Glasses*, and *The Linnaun Shee*; their importance, however, has not been generally recognised. I think there is a clear link between the three, disguised by the element of fantasy in the later plays. Fitzmaurice's fantasy, as said earlier, is a refuge from misinterpretation. Some people have observed this fact, as a passing reference by Austin Clarke in another connection indicates—"Our modern dramatic fantasies began forty years ago with those symbolic comedies by George Fitzmaurice, *The Dandy Dolls* and *The Magic Glasses*—wonder-plays which, like all true treasure, remain hidden from us until we dream for the third time." In this quotation, "symbolic" is the operative word; the symbols are obscure and generally overlooked. That some see their significance is shown by a sentence from Benedict Kiel's review of the recent *Linnaun Shee* production—"Fitzmaurice's play, written many years ago and now produced for the first time, survived some awkward opening moments, to attain to an entrancing beauty and terror and mystery." This is a striking statement about a play which others summed up as a whimsical comedy.

The Piedish is the tragedy of Leum Donohue, who has devoted his life to the modelling of an ornamental piedish, the final and complete expression of his artistic soul: "It's my heart's blood is in you, my piedish! 'Tis little more will crown it, Eugene, and then it's for old Moll of Carraweina you will go, and Black Jack of Scartaglen, and old Teigue of Glounaneinta--

to come and see it in all its glory. There is all that's left of the friends of my youth, and 'tis a lot are gone and cold surely, since I first gave under making my piedish twenty years ago." The work is interrupted by the approach of death. He prays for time to finish, but his prayer is unanswered. He calls on the devil to give him time. The dish falls from his hand and is shattered, and he dies. The priest's comment, as he takes up a piece of the dish, is: "What folly and vanity there do be in this short world! But what was in this at all? What was in this at all?" The summing-up is in Eugene's words, "it's in bits now, and what it was or what it wasn't no one will be a pin's point the wiser for ever more."

The Magic Glasses tells of how Jaymony Shanahan's family were disturbed and fearful of their good name from Jaymony's habit of retiring to the top loft, entertaining himself with strange music, and gazing into a set of magic glasses given to him by a mysterious woman many years before. They enlist the aid of a local bonesetter and quack, one Morgan Quille. Jaymony relates the wonderful sights to be seen in the three sets of glasses. Quille prescribes unusual and complicated cures. For a little while the cure seems to take effect, but Jaymony relapses into his old ways, and dies suddenly in confusion and mystery, so that the last state of the family is worse than the first.

The Linnaun Shee is the brief chronicle of James Kennelly, a strong farmer, of high reputation. The play opens on May Eve. It develops that before his marriage, many years ago, he had been bewitched by the Linnaun Shee, but had forsaken her, and remained faithful to Hanora, his wife. Lately, Hanora has discovered that his thoughts are again turning to the fairy woman, and she dreads the approach of May Eve, when the Linnaun is to take him away; "though, maybe, I shouldn't be blaming the fairy woman, with him these past three weeks going roaming, thinking to get a glimpse of her, or have a whisper with her, the heart breaking with him when she wouldn't answer him, and he invoking to her in the glens and the haunted places." When the Linnaun arrives, the door springing open before her in an uncanny fashion, she appears to the others to be a horrid hag, but to Jamesie she appears as a beautiful young girl, and he goes with her. As he goes, old Denisheen Canty, who claims to have cures for every disease, slips into Jamesie's pocket a box of ointment "would give you the clear sight." "If it gave me all the sight in the world," says Jamesie, "I wouldn't rub it to them, for 'tisn't wanting I am to have taken from me my joy, let who will call it my illusion." After strange singing outside, with sudden darkness and other signs, he reappears abruptly—alone. He looks "queer and haggard," and his manner is much changed. The play ends with his reconciliation with Hanora, but it is clear that tragedy has descended on him, and that something has gone irreparably from his world.

The bond of similarity between the plays is that they deal, to a more or less thinly disguised extent, with the difficult posi-

tion of the artist in a rural community. They deal with the opposition which is his usual fate, the instinctive fear and distrust of the workman, the true traditionalist, for the artist, the innovator, the destroyer of traditions, O'Shaughnessy's "music-makers and dreamers of dreams, the movers and shakers of the wide world." There is a curious recurrent symbol in the plays. The "brown woman" who presents the magic glasses to Jaymony ("It's through a wood the brown woman came to me, and it wasn't a crackle or a noise at all she made and she walking on the grass so green. She stood for a while where the bluebells grow") reappears as the Linnaun Shee ("Twas little," says Hanora. "I knew—on the very day we were married itself—that a brown girl who was making signs to him, and laughing and smiling to him that I took to be some local having capers with him, was the dame herself, the Linnaun Shee, trying to draw him back to keep him with her forever") and possibly as the mermaid in *The Green Stone* ("There do be great tasby in mermaids in the month of June"). I take this symbol to be the awakening of an artistic consciousness, in opposition to the hereditary urge to settle down to "cattle and crops and all things in the agricultural way."

The characters in these plays seem to be frustrated poets, throwbacks to the great school of Gaelic poets around Sliabh Luachra, the last remnants of the old Gaelic culture. That countryside and its history are the background of the plays. The stream of Gaelic culture was broken abruptly by the flight of the Earls and the centuries of recurrent terror which followed; it was replaced by the passion for land, and the struggle to survive at any price. We survived, but the price was heavy, more even than coffin-ships jammed with emigrants, more than the loss of a language now almost dead and buried except as a patriotic fiction. The price included the strangling of creative art in rural Ireland. The potential artist is discouraged by the difference of his outlook, his entire idea of life, from that of his neighbours, which he accepts as the normal and correct attitude, in the absence of any cultural tradition to encourage him; the result, usually, is repression, frustration, near-tragedy. The loss of a potential artist is a double tragedy—for society in general, as well as for the artist himself; but Fitzmaurice's later plays have been mistakenly produced as comedies. If he had done no more than draw attention to this problem, he would have laid claim to a high reputation.

Finally, there is the sheer beauty of his dialogue, which I mentioned earlier in referring to dialect plays . . . "In every play that George Fitzmaurice has written," said Andrew E. Malone, "there is displayed the perfection of dialogue that delights the artist in words." "He is," said Maurice Walsh, "the best writer of Kerry dialect that Ireland has ever produced." He has Webster's faculty of making his characters say great things at high moments, a faculty which is, in my opinion, the certain sign of a great writer.

GEORGE FITZMAURICE: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

By Liam Miller

1. FIVE PLAYS, 1914

FIVE PLAYS/BY GEORGE FITZMAURICE / THE COUNTRY DRESSMAKER / THE MOONLIGHTER / THE PIE-DISH / THE MAGIC GLASSES / THE DANDY DOLLS / MAUNSEL & CO., LTD., LONDON AND DUBLIN, 1914.
Cr. 8vo. (7 $\frac{3}{8}$ " x 5"), pp (viii) + 206.

COLLATION: Blank (i & ii); Half Title, verso blank (iii, iv); Title, copyright notice on verso, (v, vi); Contents page, verso blank, (vii, viii); Title, 'THE COUNTRY DRESSMAKER', list of characters in play on verso (1, 2); Text of *The Country Dressmaker* 3-57; 58 blank; Title 'THE MOONLIGHTER', list of characters on verso (60, 61); Text of *The Moonlighter* 61-134; Title 'THE PIE-DISH', list of characters on verso (135, 136); Text of *The Pie-Dish* 137-155; 156 blank; Title 'THE MAGIC GLASSES', list of characters on verso (157, 158); Text of *The Magic Glasses* 159-177; 178 blank; Title 'THE DANDY DOLLS', list of characters on verso (179, 180); Text of *The Dandy Dolls* 181-203; 204-206 blank. White laid paper, top edge only trimmed.

Printer's imprint (Printed by R. & R. CLARKE, LIMITED, Edinburgh.) appears at the foot of p 203.

Issued in dark grey paper boards, quarter linen, with a paper label on the spine.

The five plays appear to have been issued separately in the same year being the sheets of the plays from the collected volume bound up in wrappers, with new title pages added. Ernest Boyd in the Bibliographical Appendix to "The Contemporary Drama of Ireland" (1918) mentions only "The Country Dressmaker" as issued separately; but the 1914 editions of the other four plays were re-issued, trimmed and in blue paper wrappers, by the Talbot Press during the 1920's.

An American edition of *Five Plays* appeared in 1917, of which I have not been able to trace a copy. This edition is described in 'A Study of the Modern Drama' by Barrett H. Clark (Appleton Co., New York, 1925) as *Five Plays* (Boston 1917) contains *The Country Dressmaker, The Moonlighter, The Magic Glasses, The Pie-Dish, The Dandy Dolls*. (Note that the order in which the titles are given differs from that on the Dublin edition).

The Country Dressmaker was reprinted in Dublin by George Roberts in 1921 from the plates of 'Five Plays' and issued in green paper wrappers by Maunsel and Roberts Ltd. The remainder of this edition was trimmed down and issued in grey wrappers by the Talbot Press in their series "The Talbot Press Plays".

The remainder of the published work of George Fitzmaurice has appeared in the Dublin Magazine as follows:—

IRISH WRITING

2. THE LINNAUN SHEE. 1924.

A comedy in one act; in the Dublin Magazine, first series Vol. II, No. 3, October, 1924.

3. THE GREEN STONE. 1926

A play in One Act; in The Dublin Magazine, new series, Vol. I, No. I, January-March, 1926.

4. 'TWTXT THE GILTINANS AND THE CARMODYS. 1943

A drama; in The Dublin Magazine, new series, Vol. XVIII, No. 1, January-March, 1943.

5. THERE ARE TRAGEDIES AND TRAGEDIES, 1948.

A play in one act; in The Dublin Magazine, new series, Vol. XXIII, No. 3, July-September, 1948.

6. ONE EVENING GLEAM, 1949.

A play in one act; in The Dublin Magazine, new series, Vol. XXIV, No. 1, January-March, 1949.

FIRST PRODUCTION OF THE PLAYS

THE COUNTRY DRESSMAKER—By the Abbey Theatre Company at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, October 3rd, 1907.

THE PIE-DISH—By the Abbey Company at the Abbey Theatre, March 10th, 1908.

THE MAGIC GLASSES—By the Abbey Company at the Abbey Theatre, April 24th, 1913.

TWTXT THE GILTINANS AND THE CARMODYS—By the Abbey Company at the Abbey Theatre, March 8th, 1923.

THE DANDY DOLLS—By the Lyric Theatre Company at the Abbey Theatre, December 9th, 1945.

THE MOONLIGHTER—By the Earlsfort Players at the Peacock Theatre, Dublin, September 13th, 1948.

THE LINNAUN SHEE—By the Lyric Theatre Company at the Abbey Theatre, May 5th, 1949.

DIARMUID RUSSELL

Æ

IN his home life Æ was not what one would call a domestic man. Because of his many activities, we tactfully understood that he was not to be bothered with domestic details. One of the family stories about my early days relates how I once answered the door. When a visitor inquired for "Mr. Russell, your father?" I first looked puzzled and then brightened up to say, "Oh! You mean George. He's not my father. He just lives here."

This might suggest that I suffered from lack of attention, but in fact I had a happier life than most children. My father and I were each glad to be allowed to go our separate ways, and our relations were confined to his dispensing my allowance and to my cleaning his palettes for a small sum and fetching his Sunday papers. So for most of my childhood he was little more than a benign, bearded figure, kindly but rather remote. Children, I think, take parents for granted; and though I had vaguely gathered that my father was a little out of the usual run of parents, I had put this fact down to his beard. At that time not many men had beards, and though there might have been other things to distinguish him from other men, a beard was a noticeable fact and a difference that a child could understand.

Later on in life, for a period of three years, I acted as his assistant on the *Irish Statesman*, of which he was editor. The office of the *Statesman* was a pleasant place, a large airy room in one of those high-ceilinged Georgian houses which surround so many Dublin squares. The walls were covered with what looked like brown wrapping paper, and on these walls Father had painted scenes of trees and glades with human beings and fairies. It was, indeed, the way he saw life, the way he was himself, a mixture of realistic hardheadedness and mysticism that must have puzzled many people. Incidentally his pen name "Æ" came about because of his illegible handwriting; a printer could not make out the pen name "Æon" attached to an article, and printed as much as he could make out—the first two letters.

In this room was a desk so covered with piles of old letters and other documents that, in order to see Æ, visitors had to circle around to the side. I myself was quietly obscured by an ancient roll-top desk, and from this niche was able to listen to conversations and to become acquainted with the innumerable sides of Father's character as represented by the varied people who came to see him—farmers, clergymen, economists, artists, writers, Hindu mystics, young poets with their first verses. It was surprising that he managed to do any work, and it was only his remarkable powers of concentration that allowed him to bear the many interruptions patiently. Often an editorial might be interrupted

half a dozen times, and after each interruption he would turn to writing again without hesitation, his mind having completely switched away from the subjects he might have been discussing—co-operation, poetry, painting, or mysticism, in all of which he had a wide knowledge.

It is not because he was my father or because of his activities that I think of him as being more memorable than anyone else I have known. But he possessed, more than any other person I have met, an air of spiritual power, an emanation of sweetness and tenderness that was almost as perceptible as the light from a lamp—and as hard to describe. Our language is ill-equipped to say what the essence of man is, rather than what he does or looks like. But all who met him were affected by it. Although Father's views on religion would not have been accepted by any of the churches, it was a good Catholic who remarked of him, "The peace of God which passeth understanding lies all about him," and this is perhaps as good a way as any to describe his personality.

Neither his education nor his parents were responsible for his character. He was himself as much his own creation as his poems or his paintings. He was always saying, "You become what you contemplate," or in another form, "you become nobly like what you love and ignobly like what you hate." As he himself spent much of his time studying the religious literatures of the world, and as these, above all writings, exalt what is noblest and best in man, it is perhaps natural he should have taken on some of these characteristics. Whether by act of will or unconsciously, he became like what he admired.

Spiritually-minded people are often thought of as being unfit for the grim struggle of life, as if there were no possibility of reconciling practical affairs with spiritual thoughts. Father seemed to find no difficulty in reconciling these two aspects of existence. For some years he held a dull job in a dry goods store, and I am told he was so efficient that he could have had a career there if he had so wished. But he moved on to the co-operative movement through the agency of his friend, the poet Yeats.

For a number of years he acted as an organiser, travelling all over Ireland, by train, by jaunting car, and on a bicycle. It can't have been an easy job, for even in his later years, when time had mellowed details, he would speak to me of the wretchedly long journeys involved and the miserable rawness of the weather. But it must have had its romantic moments, for he wrote to one friend about being met in the middle of nowhere late at night by a small child who led him over mountainy paths to where a meeting was to be held; and when the meeting was over, the same small hand was waiting to lead him back. But the experience of organiser, if strenuous, gave him the first-hand knowledge of farmers and their problems which he displayed when he became editor of the *Irish Homestead*—later the *Irish Statesman*. It was not the kind of life for an impractical person—or a lazy one—for added

to his editorial duties were the tasks of testifying before government commissions and drawing up bills to be put through Parliament; and on the outside he still found time to see his innumerable friends, to paint pictures, and to write books. On occasions he would precipitate himself into more public affairs, such as his defence of the workers in a protracted transport strike in Dublin and his speech in Albert Hall in London during World War I, made at the request of the English Labour Party.

The versatility of these activities can be set down to his strong belief that a man can always do what he wants to do. A friend remembers walking with him when Æ was in middle age. While they were resting on a wall, the friend remarked that a branch of a nearby tree was a good long jump away. "You could make it," said Father. "I could not," said the friend, who was sensibly aware of the effects of age on energy. "Well, I can," the friend was astonished to hear him say, and with that he made the leap.

Although he was born in and worked in Ireland all his life, he was in many respects curiously American in his principles. Perhaps for this reason he found so much to like in that country when, in later life, he went over there. I remember his attacking with some fury an eminent man who had been lecturing there and who had returned with nothing but adverse comments in his mind.

Father had no use for any kind of aristocracy save that of character and merit. He might well have thought otherwise, for the Ireland in which he had spent his youth more often than not sacrificed efficiency for friendship. Nor had he any use for the hampering hand of tradition, which lay heavily on his country. An exasperated appeal to the younger generation to dismiss the past and the idea of doing things as they had been done before was the motive behind the poem which ended:

We would no Irish sign efface,
But yet our lips would gladlier hail
The firstborn of the coming Race
Than the last splendour of the Gael.
No blazoned banner we unfold—
One charge alone we give to youth,
Against the sceptred myth to hold
The golden heresy of truth.

He always had hopes and liking for young people and they in turn liked him. Around him, at one time or another, gathered most of the young Irish writers: James Stephens, Fred Higgins, Frank O'Connor, Sean O'Faolain, Liam O'Flaherty, and many others, to all of whom he gave what aid and encouragement he could. It might have easily have been a temptation to him to inculcate in them his own ideas. He was noticeably free from the tendency, and I can remember his delight when one of the younger writers in effect called him a has-been. I resented the statement

myself, but he said, "No young man should really respect his elders. In other countries people respect a name. In Ireland, if you stick your head up, someone will throw a stone at it, and it stops you from getting a swelled head."

His combination of hardheadedness and mysticism was rather like Emerson, an author he much admired. He discerned the spiritual basis in the qualities of independence and self-reliance. He was, in his way, a determined individualist who wanted all people to stand on their own feet. The co-operative movement did not appeal to him so much because it brought economic gains to the Irish farmer as because it showed the farmer how to prosper by his own efforts. He had a contempt for the spineless apathy of the man without will power or energy who was always crying for help. It was not that Æ was unaware of social injustices, but he thought that gifts of money were only temporary help and that real aid should arouse the spirit of independence.

On one occasion, indeed, he spoke against the acceptance of a government grant for farmers, partially because he thought the farmer would fall too easily into the habit of dipping into the government pocket, but also, I think, because he had a deep-seated dislike of the growth of government power. He once remarked "The worse our habits, the more we have what is called good government. When there are good habits in a country the business of the State dwindles." He was however, aware of the growing power of the State; in an essay written in 1915 he remarked prophetically that in twenty-five years the State would be the single most important influence in people's lives, and that its actions and power would reach into the lives of the most obscure and humble persons.

Of his reputation as a mystic I write with some hesitation. Mystical experiences cannot be disproved or proved. He did believe that faculties of a higher order than those normally exercised lay latent in all human beings and could be aroused and controlled by certain means, mainly exercises in meditation and concentration. It is a belief that has been held by many people in many countries over a long period of time. He told me it was many years before he could concentrate for as little a time as five minutes. I tried myself for some six months the exercise he told me he had used when in bed at night: he would close his eyes and imagine a white triangle, and then try to hold it in the imagination steadily. I can testify that it is not an easy exercise, for the mind is a natural rebel against discipline.

Of what particular value this and similar exercises may have proved, no outside person can assess. There were a sufficient number of incidents to suggest that he had powers of an unusual kind. On several occasions he told people facts about themselves he could not possibly have known. One friend remembers walking with him all day and suddenly wondering what the time was. He started to reach for his watch and was interrupted by Father,

who said, "Let me tell you what the time is." Father knit his brows for a moment and then said, "It is twenty-three minutes past five," which was the time the watch showed. During the first performance of his only play, *Deirdre*, the impulse took him to try to suggest to the audience the idea of water at a certain point in the play. Many people the next day spoke about the queer illusion they had of water pouring out over them from the stage.

Out of my own knowledge I can only recall one incident. A childhood friend of Father, living many thousands of miles away, wrote a letter which said he was engaged in translating some old Greek manuscripts. He added that he had attempted to give to the paper of the letter a certain impression and he wondered if Father could receive it. As a result of this, Father painted a picture of a distinctive head which lacked all hair, even eyebrows and eyelashes. Later came a letter, enclosing the translation, which spoke of a Roman general who had lost all his hair as a result of a fever.

But incidents like these can be regarded as mere curiosities and Father disliked having attention called to them. He has written about this side of his life in his book *THE CANDLE OF VISION*. The exercises themselves may indirectly have had something to do with his character. In speaking to me about them he continually stressed the fact that, for one step forward in knowledge, three must be taken in self-perfection. All knowledge, of course, is a form of power, and the world would be saved many a trouble if those who had power could free themselves from the baser thoughts and emotions.

He also had a most amazing memory, partly natural I suspect, but I think also aided by his exercise in concentration. He could repeat poems from any poet one could name. On one occasion, out of curiosity and with a faintly impish desire to see him break down, I tested him. He had commented on the book which I was reading, referring to the beauty of a particular passage. As it happened, that book, borrowed fifteen years before by an anonymous friend, had that day been returned equally anonymously. The book itself was out of print and I felt sure he could not have read it since the time it had been borrowed. I asked him if he would mind saying the passage he referred to and he repeated five pages of prose with not more than two or three minor slips—this after fifteen years and in a prose work with none of the aids to memory that poetry gives.

His beliefs certainly made his life free from the doubts, perplexities, and compromises that harass most people. I don't mean that he was immune to the small accidents of living. When, in quick succession, he had burned out the pockets of two suits by putting lighted pipes in them, he could do no more than stand before Mother like a penitent apostle, waving his hands gently and helplessly before her reproaches.

What he was free from were all questions of what was right.

and proper for him to do, and he was never troubled by the emotions of greed or envy or hatred. His life was so faultless that George Moore could only complain that he didn't know the difference between turbot and halibut. Another critic, in a mildly exasperated way, referred to his flawless moral nature. In writing as in gossip, the bad is more exciting than the good, and the only weaknesses in Fathér's nature were some small vanities, so innocent and childlike as to be more lovable than anything else. He would for example, assert the superiority of his own smoking mixture, made by adulterating his tobacco with the herb coltsfoot. And he used to argue with me, occasionally with some asperity, about the merits of billiard and cricket players, although neither of us knew anything about either subject.

Contrary to popular thought about mystics, he was not at all an ascetic-looking person. He was large, healthy, bulky, and bearded and usually had a pipe in his mouth. Someone remarked that he looked as if an angel had come to earth and seized the first human body it had come across. New suits wrinkled in a day and his overcoat looked—as James Stephens remarked in a novel—as if it had been put on with a shovel. He was just as indifferent to food as he was to dress, stoking his body with fuel as a boiler is fed with coal. He was, in fact, without worldly sophistication, and had none of the vanities that go with that quality.

Although he was an efficient and practical person in business, he was far from being materialistic. He never wanted, or tried to get, more money than would take care of the essential needs—food, clothing, housing, and an education for his children. These taken care of, he thought further money was not only a nuisance but also a hindrance to freedom. On numerous occasions he turned down offers that would have brought him in as much money for a week's work as he normally earned in a year. To anxious friends who reproached him he would say, "Let the joy be in the doing and not in the end." He was doing the work he wished to do, which he thought helped his country and the people in it, and in which he found pleasure. I believe he thought no man's work was worth more than some small amount to take care of the necessities of existence. I learned that he had once refused a position at a thousand pounds a year—but had said he would do the work for two hundred.

As he grew older and his reputation spread, many people came to call on him, and to all—young and unknown writer, or visiting celebrity—he was the same, always giving of his best. I have seen enough of well-known people to realise that this side of Father was particularly charming—and also rather instructive. There were many moments when, through boredom or with the feeling that what we have to say will be wasted, all of us lapse into a kind of superior apathy. It would never have occurred to Father to give less than his best—and more important, he would

never have thought so badly about people as to think anyone could deserve less than the best.

Father was a good conversationalist and could talk with equal interest and wisdom about good butter, the soul, or international politics. William Lyon Phelps recalls with delight a visit Father paid him in which Æ talked for ten hours more or less continuously. But the many friends he accumulated did not gather around him just for the delights of a good conversation. His presence was as warming as a fire, and people not only felt better to be with him but were better. "He is a tribunal before whom the ignoble dwindles," a friend declared.

His help to people was not only that of his presence; it could, on occasion, be practical. Only a few months ago a friend revealed to me that she had once visited him, obviously ill and needing a course of expensive treatments beyond her resources, and he had pressed on her the not inconsiderable sum required. He had never sought wealth and so could not have had much to give away, but I think he must have given what he could, and more than his family knew about. Another friend records with gratitude and some astonishment, his competence in taking over affairs after the sudden death of her husband. In a somewhat lighter vein a friend told me how he was incompetently trying to get a meal, having arrived home unexpectedly, when Father called. "Man," he said, "you don't need all that grease in the pan. Give me a bowl; I must pour off three-quarters of it. You slice the potatoes while I cook the cutlets." And so the astonished friend stood aside to let the mystic prepare the meal.

For people in general he had nothing but a vast understanding and toleration, for he seemed to know intuitively why people acted, what moods or emotions dominated them. His lifelong friend, the poet, Yeats, said of him: "He has the capacity, beyond any man I have seen, to put with entire justice not only the thoughts but emotions of the most opposite parties and personalities—and men who hated each other must sometimes have been reconciled because each heard his enemy's arguments put into better words than his own."

It is difficult to talk or write of Father, for in a sense his chief work was himself, and the things for which he was known seemed a by-product. His poetry contains his thoughts in a concentrated and somewhat difficult verse, but there are many instances of people who found in it great spiritual solace. In the last war many soldiers wrote to him that reading his poetry was the one thing that kept them sane during the horrors of war. The Municipal Art Gallery in Dublin has paintings by Watts, the English painter, sent by him because his wife, in an illness in which her life was despaired of, murmured some of Æ's poetry to herself and felt that it carried her through to health. Two viceroys of India, the Earl of Lytton and Lord Curzon, also found solace in his poems when dying.

In America he was touched—and surprised—when two reporters who had come to interview him burst into tears when he recited some of his poems at their request. What can be found in the poems could be found in the man himself; the recognition that here, at least, was one man who had been able to replace all the emotions that made life a turmoil by a vast compassion for all men. Perhaps, as Olive Schreiner says in *The Story of an African Farm*, “to be holy is to have great compassion.”

It was inevitable that Æ’s poetry and that of Yeats should have been compared, not only privately but publicly, because the two were at the time by general recognition the two leading poets in Ireland. They had been friends since boyhood, and I once asked him if the situation had never been a source of embarrassment. He only laughed and said, “Willie is a much better poet than I am. He is a great poet. He devotes all his time to his art and can spend days in reworking a line or a verse till it has reached his ultimate in perfection. I, on the other hand, have to do many, many things, some by desire and some by compulsion.” He went on to explain that what merit his own poems had was in the truth of the subject and less in the imagery. I got the feeling, though it was never openly stated, that he thought Yeats with his marvellous technique and command of language sometimes used his art on poor subjects. His remarkable memory made it easy for him to recall any poem he had written, and he would say, with perhaps a slight touch of vanity, that if all his books were burned, he would be able to rewrite all of them without difficulty. Yeats’s memory, I gather, must have been more defective, for Father used to chuckle over the fact that once, when Yeats had been rather scorning his own early poems, he had recited a number of them to him. Yeats was excited and pleased over the poems and asked who wrote them—and was displeased when he was informed that he himself was the author.

I suppose Father had favourites among his own poems, but I would not know what they were; for if asked to recite he would ask what poems were wanted. Perhaps here again his faint vanity about his memory was responsible, as if he wanted to show that nothing he had written had been forgotten. I know he was pleased with Yeats’s liking for the poem which began:—

Dusk wraps the village in its dim caress;
Each chimney’s vapour like a thin grey rod,
Mounting aloft through miles of quietness,
Pillars the skies of God.

Whether he agreed with Yeats’s liking, I don’t know. I myself think the verses entitled “Promise” as lovely as anything he ever wrote:—

Be not so desolate
Because thy dreams have flown

And the hall of the heart is empty
 And silent as stone,
 As age left by children
 Sad and alone.

Those delicate children
 Thy dreams, still endure ;
 All pure and lovely things
 Wend to the Pure.
 Sigh not : unto the fold
 Their way was sure.

Thy gentlest dreams, thy frailest,
 Even those that were
 Born and lost in a heart-beat,
 Shall meet thee there.
 They are become immortal
 In shining air.

The unattainable beauty
 The thought of which was pain,
 That flickered in eyes and on lips
 And vanished again ;
 That fugitive beauty
 Thou shalt attain.

The lights innumerable
 That led thee on and on,
 The Masque of Time ended,
 Shall glow into one.
 It shall be with thee for ever
 Thy travel done.

What merit there is in his poems, as well as the faults, probably comes from their origin. He told me poems came into his head and were usually written down quickly, needing few changes, and that they arose from a process of subconscious meditation. Sometimes one verse would come and he might have to wait a few days or a week before the other verses would spring into his mind—in one case there was a gap of thirty years between first and succeeding verses.

I don't think it would be wrong to say that what he would have liked most to do would have been to paint. Summer after summer he would depart for Donegal to bring back twenty or thirty canvases sufficiently finished so that he could work on them during the winter at his leisure. He told me at one time the urge to paint was so strong that he had contemplated doing nothing else, but had been restrained by some feeling that a single pursuit would be bad for him : in a similar fashion, years before, he had been

obsessed by mysticism and the same austerity had made him relegate that to being just a part of his life.

He must have had considerable strength of will to relegate painting to being just a hobby, for he not only found great pleasure in painting but competent people thought he could have been a great painter. A former director of the National Gallery in Ireland remarked that if Father had ever taken lessons he would have become one of the foremost painters of his time; and an old friend, a Dublin art dealer, on my last visit, offered it as his opinion that Æ would be remembered as an artist long after his poems were forgotten.

His prices for paintings must have infuriated other artists, for Father felt he had no right to make money out of a hobby, and so had calculated carefully the cost of the materials—canvases and paint and oils and brushes. Adding a small charge for his time—which couldn't have amounted to fifty pence an hour—he had arrived at the figure of five pounds for a small canvas and ten pounds for a large one. This figure was revised upwards a little as costs increased over the years, but other Irish artists may have felt aggrieved at the unfair competition. Maybe Father felt there was something in this, for he stopped showing his pictures and kept them in the house, where only friends could see them.

These numerous interests—co-operation, painting, poetry, mysticism, the editing of a weekly journal—were all kept going by a gigantic energy which left little time for relaxation. The latter usually took the form of mystery stories, of which he read from six to ten a week, and it was one of my household duties to see that a constant supply was at hand at all times. If the output of mystery stories—as sometimes happened—didn't equal his capacity for reading them, he would prowling unhappily about the house, hoping that somewhere or other one would materialise.

I might have wondered why, in an age of specialisation, he had not chosen to become a master of one talent, if he had not once used an illuminating phrase in discussing with me a famous scientist. "He is not really intelligent," he said, "for his mind embraces little outside his profession. A candle does not shine light only in one direction." It was a revealing sentence, for it made me see that his real preoccupation had nothing to do with worldly success, but was with the completion of his own character. It was the kind of pursuit of self-perfection which mystics through the ages have been intent upon, and in Father's case it produced a kind of warm serenity, a saintliness of character so moving and so lovable that when he was dying, as a friend wrote, "even the surgeon, whose skill must defend itself against sentimentality, turned away for a moment in tears."

BOOK REVIEWS

STORYTELLING—A CONVERSATION PIECE

TRAVELLER'S SAMPLES, BY FRANK O'CONNOR, (*Macmillan* 8/6).

. . . . The devil fire you! The cow's in the cabbage again and you sit there with an ould book.

Well so, then both the cow and myself are having the best of times. Now, after the news, will you hould your whisht and let me get on with my studies.

Studies! Studies, moryah! One would think that you were just home from school instead of having one leg in the grave. What's all the 'study' about?

'Tis a book by my friend, Frank O'Connor. 'Tis called "Traveller's Samples"—wherever he got the name—and 'tis published by a Scotsman, by the name of Macmillan. The Scots were ever sound judges, in my experience of them.

Will you listen to the travelled man! What's it about anyway? What would Frank O'Connor be writing a book about at all?

What is it about? Why, 'tis about what all the best books were ever written and all the best tales ever told. 'Tis about the wonder of human beings and the fun of them and the pity of them. 'Tis about their joys and their fears and their prides and their rogueries.

Is that all?

Is that all? Is that all, indeed! 'Tis a deal you want for your eight and sixpence. I suppose that you would expect news from the sun and moon as well.

Human beings! Glory be! What sort of human beings would he be writing about now?

The best of human beings—Irishmen. And what's more, Corkmen, the salt of the whole of Ireland—if it weren't for the Kerry men. There's stories about young lads in Cork and con-niving lassies up the country—and there's a great story about a priest and some onions away over in Enland, to give abundance for your money.

'Some onions' . . . Away over in England! . . . Glory be! Yerra, what does anyone want to be bothering their heads with ould stories for at all?

Because woman, there's people in this world so busy making money or bothering their heads about the past or worrying themselves about the next world that they haven't time to live for themselves at all and use the eyes and the ears and the imagination God gave them. And throughout the history of the world

the story-teller was the man to bring them back to the right use of their senses and their time, if he could. Though I must allow that there's a deal of the story-tellers of the present day make a bad fist at the job being themselves as afflicted with the same complaint as their patients. But that is where O'Connor happens to be different and a real story-teller in the old tradition and the right meaning of the word. He sees the world as it is and not as it ought to be or happen he'd like it to be. And seeing it so he sees that it's not a bad class of a place to be living in after all. 'Tis a place to knock a squeeze out of anyways. There's a share maybe of bad in it if you look hard enough for it and wear the right kind of spectacles. But if there is kindness in your heart it colours the sight of your eyes so that mostly you see only the fun and the goodness of it and come to thank God that you are alive in the world He made.

Wisha! 'Tis a great missioner you'd make. 'Tis a pity that you don't write a 'sthory' yourself and get a Scotsman to make a book out of it.

Happen maybe, some day when I have time the fancy may take me that way. It will be a day when I am not being pestered about the cow in the cabbage and the rabbits in the oats. I'd almost say, if ever that day came and I was to knock a stir into myself in that direction, that I would hardly do better than Frank O'Connor in this book of his for there's little that any man can tell him about the telling of a story and along with that he has the eye and the ear and the understanding for the gist of a story.

Aren't you the great one entirely? 'Tis a wonder that your head doesn't bust with the height of ideas you have. Have an idea now to settle the fire and put on the kettle for its time for the tea.

ERIC CROSS.

PAUL HENRY'S ACHIEVEMENT

AN IRISH PORTRAIT, BY PAUL HENRY, (*Batsford*, 15s. -).

Here is a self-portrait by Paul Henry, set firmly, without affectation, in the centre of the canvas. In his autobiography as in his painting it is the background of the subject that is most dwelt upon, and here it is depicted in a gentle and refined manner.

Mr. Henry begins at the beginning and tells of his student days in Paris, and of his development there. His gradual and wary approach, and ultimate surrender to the painting of Gauguin, Cézanne, Van Gogh, Renoir—then hardly known to the great public—provides one of the rare occasions in this book, in which the author allows himself to describe a personal experience in his art. Later the scene is London. There is an entertaining chapter on the vicissitudes of a young painter trying to establish himself. Then, by a virtual fluke, he is directed to Achill. But was it

a fluke? Who can speak of the mysterious inner pressure on one who knows he has something to say?

It is after the discovery of Achill that the outline of the portrait becomes firmer, and the background of the picture lights up with a tender magic.

That the imagination of the painter was immediately fired on his first contact with the West there can be no doubt. The quality of the book becomes sturdy, gentle and human. He says, "I wanted to live there, not as a visitor but to identify myself with its life and to see it every day in all its moods; in wind and rain, in storm, in summer and in winter, and by painting it in all these conditions to find out, if I could, the driving force behind its attractiveness. I wanted to know the people, their intimate lives," observing "their surroundings as closely and single-mindedly as the French naturalist, Fabre, studied the insects of his devotion in the stony fields and vineyards of Provence." And he succeeded! His drawings remind one of the intimate ruggedness which Millet and Van Gogh saw. Judging by the paintings made during this formative Achill period, Paul Henry captured all its moods; its mercurial temper, the flutter of its summer, the eeriness of its evening space.

In a foreword, Sean O'Faolain has admirably pointed out to the reader the universality of Paul Henry's work. The book has eight very attractive colour plates. But it crosses the mind that had they been chosen from a wider field of his work, they would have been a more suitable accompaniment to the variety of the text.

PAUL BRAMBLE.

POETRY IN MODERN IRELAND, BY AUSTIN CLARKE. (*At the Sign of the Three Candles*, 2/-).

SELECTED POEMS, BY ROBERT FARREN. (*Sheed & Ward*, 10/6)

Poetry in Modern Ireland is the second booklet to be published for the Cultural Relations Committee of Ireland. "The aim of this series," says a note on the verso of the title-page, "is to give a broad, vivid and informed survey of Irish life and culture." There can be no doubt that Mr. Austin Clarke is informed as few others are anywhere in the world with regard to the poetry of this country. He has, distinguished poet as he is himself, given evidence by broadcast, essay and reviewing of his capacity to keep within normal bounds personal prejudice in his appraisal of the work of earlier as well as contemporary poets. His style is dignified without a trace of pomposity and made sparkling now and then by a sly illuminatory comment. As when he prefaces Yeats' poem that ends:

I shudder and I sigh to think
That even Cicero
And many-minded Homer were
Mad as the mist and snow

with the remark that reading such a lyric "we forget that he had little Latin and less Greek."

His account of the poetic movement and its influences, its development rather than its revival, is as vivid as any member of the Cultural Committee could expect. But is the Committee satisfied that its purpose of a "broad" survey of this branch of Irish culture has been achieved in its ratio to Mr. Clarke of seventy pages in which to deal with the richest period in Anglo-Irish literature. The latter has performed a miracle of condensation. He has had to exclude even the mention of the many younger poets who have only been published in periodicals and could only summarily pass judgment on those whose work is more permanently established between binders' boards.

"Verse", says Mr. Clarke in another connection, "is no longer worth a bad penny." If the country has mothered a poetic movement from say, Hyde through Yeats to Patrick Kavanagh, it should at least be able to find enough money to tell the world how important this movement is and not leave the task to foreign researchers. What was required was 700 not 70 pages. In the circumstances the reviewer feels that he may not, in fairness, point out omissions. But if he may be allowed one comment: some reference might have been made to the splendid work in encouraging Irish poetry which is being done by Seamus O'Sullivan's *Dublin Magazine* and more recently by David Marcus's *Poetry Ireland*.

Mr. Clarke devotes a relatively large portion of his meagre space to the history of modern experimentation in assonantal verse from Gaelic models. It is apt that Mr. Robert Farren's *Selected Poems* should appear at the same time for there is no more enthusiastic, no more serious experimenter in versification based on the Gaelic tradition. Mr. Farren is technique-conscious and feels constrained to elucidate his verse patterns but he can rely on the inherent music of his verse to explain itself to ears already attuned to his own and earlier practitioners in partial rhyming.

Mr. Farren's admirers—and they must be many—will be glad to have this selection by the poet of his work fifteen years after the date of his first published book. New readers will be able to assess the development of a mind that goes beyond mere Bardic worship and what James Stephens called 'reincarnations' to a full poetic life of its own, seeking God in prayer and man in the "soul and thing" that make him. But Mr. Farren has an earthly joy in living to add to his mysticism. The latter quality is denied him by Mr. Clarke. He would have it that Robert Farren is doctrinal. But reading again his rich verse that evokes saints and scholarpoets, the Virgin and the vine, the feeling descends upon one that in his search for God he is one with G. K. Chesterton of whom he says

That until truth is gay there is no quest.

A. J. LEVENTHAL.

SWEET CORK OF THEE, BY ROBERT GIBBINGS. (*Dent*, 16/-).

The real Ireland and the real Irish people—to be found at their consistent and proud best only, as would be expected, when one takes the road away from the cities and towns—have hardly aged at all. They have resisted the giant, bludgeoning palm of the Industrial Age and the insidious, jewelled stroking of the Hollywood Age with sturdiness and comparative success. But one cannot gainsay the decay that has taken root and with each successive generation the changes are more obvious. Thank goodness, then, for Robert Gibbings, who has recorded, with such perfection of line and style, this changing—perhaps vanishing—civilisation.

Mr. Gibbings' latest book, *Sweet Cork of Thee*, is a sheer delight to eye and ear. The reader will expect any book by this author to be a delight to the eye for his woodcuts are alive with exquisite grace and rhythm, and they breathe with the very soul and spirit of their subjects. But one might be slightly unprepared for the assertion that *Sweet Cork of Thee* is a delight to the ear, since one does not usually read a prose-work, much less a travel-book, aloud. I submit, however, that there are passages of description in this book that are as haunting and memorable as poetry. Take for instance this part about the approaches to Gougane Barra:

The road winds with the river, at one moment level beside untroubled waters, in a wide valley where lapwings wheel; at the next, tortuous above a torrent where salmon leap. Then for a while calmly, tracing the contours of lake shores with range beyond range of hills to south and west, the cones of Sheehy and Doughil high above them all. Finally, a game of hide-and-seek among the crags and heather-covered ridges, the road a track, the Lee a tarn, and the smell of turf fires sweet in the air. Ochre and lavender of heath and rocks and gold of bursting gorse, silver of lichens in the ink-green ling, and coral red of myrtle buds. One last mile of twists and turns sharp hills and sudden dips, and then Gougane.

Much of that is reminiscent, in its rhythm and idiom, of the best nature-poetry about Ireland left us by the pre-nineteenth-century Gaelic poets, and indeed Gibbings' 'oneness' with his subject at all times and the perfect aptness and joy of his style and stories remind me of no one more than of that other inspired recorder of the Irish countryside—the late Pádraic O'Conaire.

Sweet Cork of Thee ranges through all the county of Cork with particular visits to Kinsale, the Skelligs, Puck Fair, the Regatta at Schull, and the Blaskets, and introduces us to a host of the most perfect 'gems' of people, all full-blooded and delightful in their individuality. Each one seems to have either wit, wisdom, or the winning way (frequently the three combined) and Robert Gibbings

has put them before us with love and sincerity.

This is a book to treasure, and if the inhabitants of the other counties of Ireland—especially the men of Kerry—should as a result bombard Mr. Gibbings with invitations and pleas to hurry over and do as much for their native parts, I wouldn't be at all surprised. I hope they will. I hope he does.

D.M.

ABC OF READING, BY EZRA POUND. (*Faber*, 8/6).

What a day for "culture" when this little book goes on the School List! Not that such a day will ever come—for those, whose business it is to clarify our minds and instruct us—whether in primary school or Universities—are compelled by the barbarous economics of our time to safeguard their existence by surrounding themselves and their profession with squid-like clouds of obscurity intended to suggest an esoteric atmosphere of almost superhuman erudition.

Thus the pedagogue to-day distrusts, more than anything else, that clarity and illumination which is the pupil's highest desideratum . . . like almost everything else, Education has become a racket, and Pound, adopting the technique of the hi-jacker (*anglice*: counter-racketeer) "muscles-in" on Literature with a machine-gun barrage of CAPITAL LETTERS . . . and a general "Reach for it! This is it!" manner that suggests meeting an old and perhaps rather rowdy friend in a most unexpected place.

The body of world literature does not change; but the significance of certain authors varies considerably as the world and its times change around and about us. Hence the value of Pound's "Exhibits" in this book. His "Exercises" have all the fascination of the "How-to-do-it" manual written by a practising expert. He knows exactly what he wants to say and says it without any beating about the bush whatsoever:

Rhythm is a form cut into TIME, as a design is determined SPACE.

A melody is a rhythm in which the pitch of each element is fixed by the composer.

(Pitch: the number of vibrations per second.)

. . . It is hard to tell whether music has suffered more by being taught than has verse-writing from having no teachers. Music in the past century of shame and degradation slumped in large quantities down into a soggy mass of tone.

In general we may say that the deliquescence of instruction in any art proceeds in this manner . . .

And he proceeds to tell you. As you will have to buy this book any way, you can read all about it yourself!

There are many points on which I disagree entirely with Pound. He lays, in my opinion, far too much stress on the link

between the song and poetry, and leans heavily upon Dante for authority. But his staccato methods punch you into the heart of the matter immediately:

Gloom and solemnity are entirely out of place in even the most rigorous study of an art originally intended to make glad the heart of man. . .

Literature is news that STAYS news.

A Japanese student asked the difference between prose and poetry, said: Poetry consists of gists and piths.

This whole book consists of "gists and piths" . . . get it, and READ it . . . it will DO YOU GOOD!

CECIL FFRENCH SALKELD.

THE WHOLE STORY OF THE X.Y.Z., BY BRINSLEY MAC-NAMARA. (*H. R. Carter Publications, Belfast, 8/-*).

This long short story, which may perhaps be described as a study in "Bovaryisme", is concerned with the exploits of a "Young Zozimus Society" which had hilarious notions of "changing the world"; their stage was Dublin at the beginning of the century and their history is related with great zest to the narrator of the story by an elderly and impish solicitor's clerk who is constantly "off again" on the subject when on opening the morning papers he learns of the death of yet another member of the fabulous society of his youth, in the passing of some political or professional worthy. It seems at last that he must be the only surviving member: he is in truth the only one that has ever existed—and that only in a dream. Mr. MacNamara well conveys the eager imagination of his central figure. And if the "exploits" seem to have been given in a rather too lavish manner, there is no attempt to over-emphasise the pathos and irony of the story, but they are there.

T.S.

OUR LADY'S TUMBLER, BY RONALD DUNCAN. (*Faber, 8/6*).

The theme of Mr. Duncan's latest play in verse is that of "Le Jongleur de Notre Dame", and if one is disposed to question his complete wisdom in choosing a subject already given memorable form by Anatole France, one has to admit that he has made his own contribution to it, mainly by the introduction of a hymnal-chorus to which perhaps half the play is given. This choric element which includes a long monologue poem, is highly elaborate; it would certainly be churlish to suggest that it is, if anything, a little too assured, written with too much skill, especially as it so greatly adds to the effectiveness of the final incident—the tumbler's

clumsy performance before the statue of Our Lady. Here Mr. Duncan had the happy notion of making the "act" extremely lame and out-of-practice. One is surprised to find, however, that in this version there is no response from the statue, all the more so as the likelihood is mentioned earlier in the play. Perhaps it seemed too miraculous, a little excessive in a play due for performance in Salisbury Cathedral, but it seems a pity. The verse is written with unflinching accomplishment, and has many beauties. One wholeheartedly recommends this play for performance to our more talented and enterprising dramatic companies, as it is such works, one feels, of high quality and devoid of trickery, which would do much to establish a right trend.

T.S.

THE ENCHAFED FLOOD, OR THE ROMANTIC ICONOGRAPHY OF THE SEA, BY W. H. AUDEN, (*Faber*, 10/6)

Auden describes his new work as "an attempt to understand the nature of Romanticism through an examination of its treatment of a single theme, the sea." It is largely an anthology of prose and verse pieces about the sea, deserts and islands, drawn mainly from Wordsworth, Blake, Melville, Baudelaire, Poe, and Hopkins, and linked by a prose commentary. This commentary, which is what really matters, is written in a tentative, and often indeed anonymous, style and includes many reflections on social philosophy, religion and aesthetics.

This book has much of the same charm as, for instance, Aldous Huxley's "Texts and Pretexts" but Auden's anthology is more purposeful and much less confident. An anthology is extremely difficult to manipulate towards any philosophical conclusion; a single quotation, in fact, while it may sometimes give point to a speech, often tends, like the Devil quoting Scripture, to overwhelm the argument. Auden at times attempts to abstract a non-aesthetic significance from his quotations, as when he quotes these lines from Byron's *Childe Harold*:

Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore

to illustrate that "the individual in either the Romantic sea or the Romantic desert is free from both the evils and the responsibilities of communal life."

Happily he makes a more valid use of most of his quotations, and his book may be better enjoyed if seen as an attempt to clarify the use of symbols rather than as an essay on Romanticism. Read in this way the commentary is full of interest for the hints it gives of his approach to symbols and other things, and is intellectually compelling.

His chief concern is with the problem of the writer to dis-

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cover full and valid symbols in a fragmentary society. A solution seems to be forthcoming in his vision of our times as an age "when the necessity of dogma is once more recognised, not as the contradiction of reason and feeling but as their ground and foundation, in which the heroic image is not the nomad wanderer through the desert or over the ocean, but the less exciting figure of the builder, who renews the ruined walls of the city." This seems to link up with the more recent approach of scientists, philosophers and political economists. It is not new, but as a preface to Auden's future work it is a most significant assent.

P. J. MADDEN.

IRELAND: AN INTRODUCTION TO HER HISTORY.
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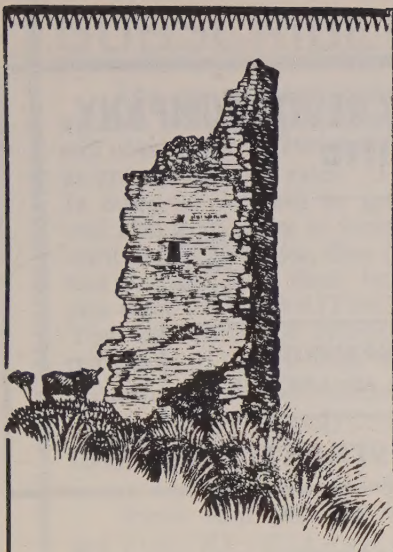
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DIARMUID RUSSELL: Began his career as an assistant editor of "The Irish Statesman" under his father, Æ. Then he went to the U.S.A. where he was first the editor of a publishing house, afterwards making a name for himself as a literary agent and an author in his own right.

JOHN P. POWER: Born Kilworth, Co. Cork, 1912. Has done free-lance journalism and wrote, ten years ago, what has been called the G.A.A. (Gaelic Athletic Association) classic, 'A Story of Champions.' The story appearing in this issue of 'Irish Writing' is from a collection called 'No Home for a Hero' which is as yet unpublished. Is married and has three children.

DESMOND CLARKE: Born Dublin, 1907. His stories have appeared widely in Ireland and Britain. He is Librarian of the Royal Dublin Society.

TEMPLE LANE: Descended from an old Irish family, she has published novels and two volumes of verse and has also lectured. Won the Tailteann Gold Medal with her novel 'The Little Wood.'

MAURICE KENNEDY: Born Youghal, Co. Cork, 1924. Is in the Irish Civil Service. Has had work published in 'The Dublin Magazine' and is dramatic critic for an Irish Sunday paper.

MICHAEL CAMPBELL: Born Dublin, 1924. Graduate of Dublin University and a barrister-at-law. Was first published in earlier issues of 'Irish Writing.' Lives in London.

EWART MILNE: Born Dublin, 1903, now living in England. Is one of the leading contemporary Irish poets and recently had his 'Selected Poems' drawn from his first five volumes published.

BENEDICT KIELY: Born Dromore, Co. Tyrone, 1919. A graduate of U.C.D. Is a journalist by profession and has published novels, stories, and literary criticism.